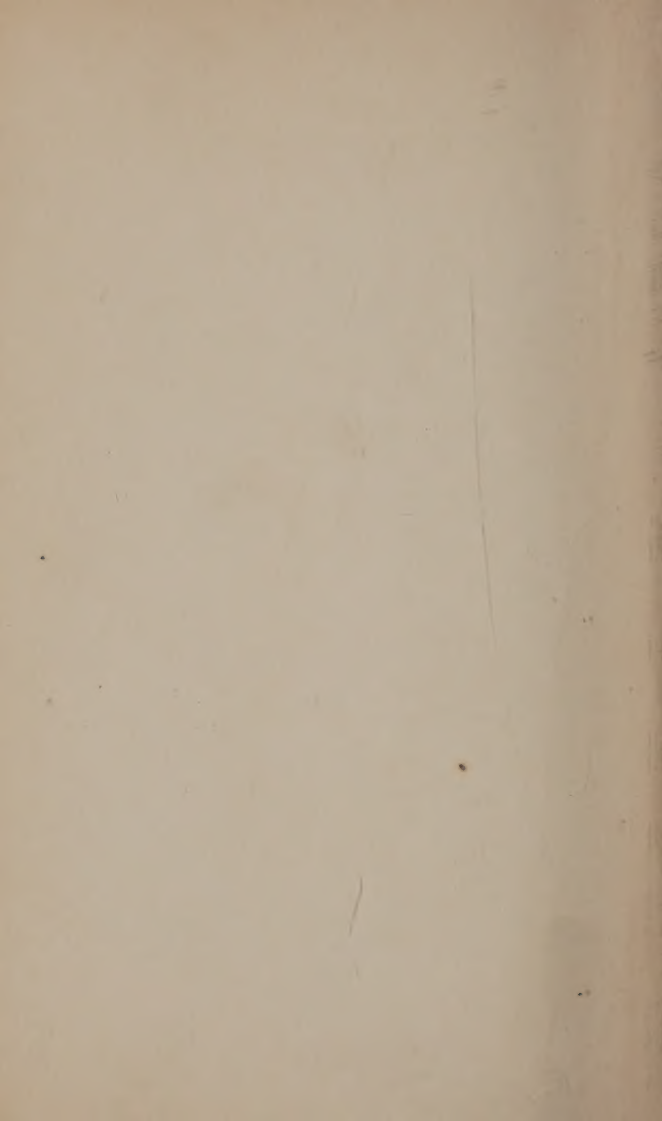


LEAVES OF GRASS

WALT WHITMAN



POETRY AND DRAMA



LEAVES OF GRASS

The book is a valuable addition to the literature of the subject, and is well illustrated. It is a reprint of the original, and is not a new edition. The reprinting and binding of the book have been done in a most satisfactory manner.

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This book is a reprint of the first edition of LEAVES OF GRASS, published in Brooklyn, New York, in 1855. The text is a faithful copy of the original, and has not been edited or abridged in any way. The typography and design of the book have been altered, however, to meet the requirements of modern production methods.

Whitman revised and greatly expanded LEAVES OF GRASS in a series of later editions, but this is the form in which his book first appeared, and it is this edition which prompted Emerson's famous letter.

LEAVES OF GRASS

BY

WALT WHITMAN



Dolphin Books
Doubleday & Company, Inc.
Garden City, New York

Printed in the United States of America

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes. . . . Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it

must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and openhandedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man . . . nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest . . . namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets.—As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall be-

hind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of full-sized men or one full-sized man unconquerable and simple.

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and Saint Lawrence with the falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him. The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by him. When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them. On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and liveoak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon . . . and tangles as tangled as any canebrake or swamp . . . and forests coated with transparent ice and icicles hanging from the boughs and crackling in the wind . . . and sides and peaks of mountains . . . and

pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie with flights and songs and screams that answer those of the wildpigeon and highhold and orchard-oriole and coot and surf-duck and redshouldered-hawk and fish-hawk and white-ibis and indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pheasant and qua-bird and pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor and night-heron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends both mother's and father's. To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events—of the enormous diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines—the tribes of red aborigines—the weatherbeaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coasts—the first settlements north or south—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace and formation of the constitution the union always surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharfhem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior—the log-houses and clearings and wild animals and hunters and trappers the free commerce—the fisheries and whaling and gold-digging—the endless gestation of new states—the convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and the uttermost parts the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and workwomen the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise—the perfect equality of the female with the male the large amativeness—the fluid movement of the population—the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving machinery—the Yankee swap—the New-York firemen and the target excursion—the southern plantation life—the character of the northeast and of the northwest and southwest—slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the American poet is to be transcendant and new. It is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic. Its quality goes through these to much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted

and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista. Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonecutters and plans with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, freetrade, intertravel by land and sea . . . nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot . . . he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it . . . he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands turning a concentrated light . . . he turns the pivot with his finger . . . he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith . . . he spreads out his dishes . . . he offers the sweet firmfibred meat that grows men and women. His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer . . . he is judgment. He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun

falling around a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the most faith. His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. In the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he is silent. He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement . . . he sees eternity in men and women . . . he does not see men and women as dreams or dots. Faith is the antiseptic of the soul . . . it pervades the common people and preserves them . . . they never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred and perfect as the greatest artist. . . . The power to destroy or remould is freely used by him but never the power of attack. What is past is past. If he does not expose superior models and prove himself by every step he takes he is not what is wanted. The presence of the greatest poet conquers . . . not parleying or struggling or any prepared attempts. Now he has passed that way see after him! there is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell . . . and no man thenceforward shall be degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin.

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulations . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvellous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you

have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes . . . but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects . . . they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough . . . probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive . . . some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough . . . the fact will prevail through the universe . . . but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote

your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is always ready ploughed and manured . . . others may not know it but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . . . and shall master all attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the day-break or a scene of the winter woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . . . he is sure . . . he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of all perfection and beauty.

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss . . .

it is inevitable as life . . . it is exact and plumb as gravitation. From the eyesight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. To these respond perfections not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for the rest but in the rest themselves just the same. These understand the law of perfection in masses and floods . . . that its finish is to each for itself and onward from itself . . . that it is profuse and impartial . . . that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an acre of the earth or sea without it—nor any direction of the sky nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . . one part does not need to be thrust above another. The best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ . . . the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest measure and similes and sound.

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . . he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . . by that flash of

the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterwards for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the graygull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or sooth I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my

composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint. A heroic person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another . . and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain.

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors . . They shall be kosmos . . without monopoly or secresy . . glad to pass any thing to any one . . hungry for equals night and day. They shall not be careful of riches and privilege . . . they shall be riches and privilege . . . they shall perceive who the most affluent man is. The most affluent man is he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the

stronger wealth of himself. The American bard shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most nor truth most nor the soul most nor the body most . . . and not be for the eastern states more than the western or the northern states more than the southern.

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support. The outset and remembrance are there . . there the arms that lifted him first and brace him best . . . there he returns after all his goings and comings. The sailor and traveler . . the anatomist chemist astronomer geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem. No matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception of it . . of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls . . . always of their father-stuff must be begotten the sinewy races of bards. If there shall be love and content between the father and the son and if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness of the father there shall be love between the poet and the man of demonstrable science. In the beauty of poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of the investigation of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and circling here swells the soul of the poet yet it president of itself always. The depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The innocence and nakedness are resumed . . they are neither modest nor immodest. The whole theory of the special and supernatural and all that was twined with it or educed out of it departs as a dream. What has ever happened . . . what happens and whatever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all . . . they are sufficient for any case and for all cases . . none to be hurried or retarded . . . any miracle of affairs or persons inadmissible in the vast clear scheme where every motion and every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect miracles all referring to all and each distinct and in its place. It is also

not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply to be taken as they are, and the investigation of their past and present and future shall be unintermitted and shall be done with perfect candor. Upon this basis philosophy speculates ever looking toward the poet, ever regarding the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness never inconsistent with what is clear to the senses and to the soul. For the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that . . . whatever is less than the laws of light and of astronomical motion . . . or less than the laws that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard through this life and doubtless afterward . . . or less than vast stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the patient upheaving of strata—is of no account. Whatever would put God in a poem or system of philosophy as contending against some being or influence is also of no account. Sanity and ensemble characterise the great master . . . spoilt in one principle all is spoilt. The great master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in being one of the mass . . . he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is great for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great . . . that nothing for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up well . . . that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty is indispensable. Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever men and women exist . . . but never takes any adherence or welcome from the rest more than from poets. They are the voice and exposition of liberty. They out of ages are worthy the grand idea . . . to them it is confided and they must sustain it. Nothing has precedence of it and nothing can warp or degrade it. The attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots.

The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet, the motions of their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope to the other. Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak or advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson. Liberty is poorly served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or two failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indifference or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon or any penal statutes. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat . . . the enemy triumphs . . . the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work . . . the cause is asleep . . . the strong throats are choked with their own blood . . . the young men drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other . . . and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second or third to go . . it waits for all the rest to go . . it is the last. . . When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away . . . when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators . . . when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead . . . when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and laws for informers and bloodmoney are sweet to the taste of the people . . . when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master—and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves . . . when the soul retires in the cool communion of the night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the gripers or into any cruel inferiority . . . when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet—when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for

their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart and when servility by town or state or the federal government or any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without its own punishment following duly after in exact proportion against the smallest chance of escape or rather when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth—then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth.

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance. As they emit themselves facts are showered over with light the daylight is lit with more volatile light also the deep between the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold. Each precise object or condition or combination or process exhibits a beauty the multiplication table its—old age its—the carpenter's trade its—the grand-opera its the hugehulled cleanshaped New-York clipper at sea under steam or full sail gleams with unmatched beauty the American circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs and the commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs. The poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles. They are of use they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit. You large proprietor they say shall not realize or perceive more than any one else. The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it. Any one and every one is owner of the library who can read the same through all the varieties of tongues and subjects and styles, and in whom they enter with ease and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful

and rich and large. These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any thing to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed . . but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament. . . Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jettied and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day. . . . Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances. As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.

The great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor. Then folks echo a new cheap joy and a divine voice leaping from their brains: How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor. Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest particle or the faintest tinge of a shade—and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised . . . and that the soul has never been once fooled and never can be fooled . . . and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only

a foetid puff and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth.

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied to human affairs . . these are called up of the float of the brain of the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself and his family and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of moneymaking with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits and underhanded dodgings, or infinitessimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve . . and all the loss of the bloom and odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and

the issuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naivete, and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud upon modern civilization and forethought, blotching the surface and system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears the immense features it spreads and spreads with such velocity before the reached kisses of the soul. . . Still the right explanation remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality. What is wisdom that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests as far as you can look in every direction running gaily toward you? Only the soul is of itself . . . all else has reference to what ensues. All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed . . not of venereal sores or discolorations . . not the privacy of the onanist . . not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rumdrinkers . . . not speculation or cunning or betrayal or murder . . no serpentine poison of those that seduce women . . not the foolish yielding of women . . not prostitution . . not of any depravity of young men . . not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means . . not any nastiness of appetite . . not any harshness of officers to men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or husbands to wives or bosses to their boys . . not of greedy looks or malignant wishes . . . nor any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves . . . ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized and returned, and that returned in further perform-

ances . . . and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be anything else than the profoundest reason, whether it brings arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it forever. If the savage or felon is wise it is well . . . if the greatest poet or saven is wise it is simply the same . . . if the President or chief justice is wise it is the same . . . if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more or less . . . if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less. The interest will come round . . . all will come round. All the best actions of war and peace . . . all help given to relatives and strangers and the poor and old and sorrowful and young children and widows and the sick, and to all shunned persons . . . all furtherance of fugitives and of the escape of slaves . . . all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks and saw others take the seats of the boats . . . all offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or opinion's sake . . . all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their neighbors . . . all the vast sweet love and precious suffering of mothers . . . all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded . . . all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose fragments of annals we inherit . . . and all the good of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or location . . . all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or not . . . all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine heart of man or by the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his great hands . . . and all that is well thought or done this day on any part of the surface of the globe . . . or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by those there as we are here . . . or that is henceforth to be well thought or done by you whoever you are, or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at their time and inure

now and will inure always to the identities from which they sprung or shall spring. . . Did you guess any of them lived only its moment? The world does not so exist . . no parts palpable or impalpable so exist . . . no result exists now without being from its long antecedent result, and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer the beginning than any other spot. . . . Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. The prudence of the greatest poet answers at last the craving and glut of the soul, is not contemptuous of less ways of prudence if they conform to its ways, puts off nothing, permits no let-up for its own case or any case, has no particular sabbath or judgment-day, divides not the living from the dead or the righteous from the unrighteous, is satisfied with the present, matches every thought or act by its correlative, knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement . . knows that the young man who composedly periled his life and lost it has done exceeding well for himself, while the man who has not periled his life and retains it to old age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing for himself worth mentioning . . and that only that person has no great prudence to learn who has learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors body and soul the same, and perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct, and what evil or good he does leaping onward and waiting to meet him again—and who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries or avoids death.

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is today. If he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides and if he does not attract his own land body and soul to himself and hang on its neck with incomparable love and plunge his semitic muscle into its merits and demerits . . . and if he be not himself the age transfigured and if to him is not opened the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and processes and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shape of today, and is held by the ductile anchors of life, and makes the present spot the passage from what was to

what shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave—let him merge in the general run and wait his development. . . . Still the final test of poems or any character or work remains. The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead and judges performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style and the direction of genius to similar points be satisfactory now? Has no new discovery in science or arrival at superior planes of thought and judgment and behaviour fixed him or his so that either can be looked down upon? Have the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long after he is buried? Does the young man think often of him? and the young woman think often of him? and do the middleaged and the old think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common and for all degrees and complexions and all departments and sects and for a woman as much as a man and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a beginning. Has any one fancied he could sit at last under some due authority and rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest poet bring . . . he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and ease. The touch of him tells in action. Whom he takes he takes with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained . . . thenceforward is no rest . . . they see the space and ineffable sheen that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums. The companion of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and learns one of the meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos . . . the elder encourages the younger and shows him how . . . they two shall launch off fearlessly together till the new world fits an orbit for itself and looks unabashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and sweeps through the ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

'There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done.

They may wait awhile . . perhaps a generation or two . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place . . . the gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest. The churches built under their umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects today, symptoms of the past and future . . . They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

The English language befriends the grand American expression . . . it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstances was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance . . it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behaviour or oratory or social intercourse or household arrangements or public institutions or the treatment by bosses of employed people, nor executive detail or detail of the army or navy, nor spirit of legislation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or amusements or the costumes of young men, can long elude the jealous and passionate instinct of American standards. Whether or no the sign appears from the mouths of the people, it throbs a live interrogation in every freeman's and freewoman's heart after that which passes by or this built to remain. Is it uniform with my country? Are its disposals without ignominious

distinctions? Is it for the evergrowing communes of brothers and lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old models, generous beyond all models? Is it something grown fresh out of the fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know that what answers for me an American must answer for any individual or nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does this answer? or is it without reference to universal needs? or sprung of the needs of the less developed society of special ranks? or old needs of pleasure overlaid by modern science and forms? Does this acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute acknowledgement, and set slavery at nought for life and death? Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung man, and a woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it improve manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic? Does it solve readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many children? Has it too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality? Does it look with the same love on the last born and on those hardening toward stature, and on the errant, and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside of their own?

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great.

The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance. America prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite . . . they are not unappreciated . . . they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work. No disguise can pass on it . . . no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its

poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.

LEAVES OF GRASS

LEAVES OF GRASS

I celebrate myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of
summer grass.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes the shelves
are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not
let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume it has no taste
of the distillation it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised
and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,
Echos, ripples, and buzzed whispers loveroot, silk-
thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration the beating of my
heart the passing of blood and air through my
lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore
and darkcolored sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,

The sound of the belched words of my voice . . . words
loosed to the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses . . . a few embraces . . . a reach-
ing around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple
boughs wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along
the fields and hillsides,
The feeling of health . . . the full-noon trill . . . the
song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you
reckoned the earth much?
Have you practiced so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the
origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun . . . there
are millions of suns left,
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand
. . . nor look through the eyes of the dead . . . nor
feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things
from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

I have heard what the talkers were talking . . . the talk
of the beginning and the end,
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now;
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge, ..
Always the procreant urge of the world.
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance . . . Always
substance and increase,

Always a knit of identity always distinction
always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail Learned and unlearned feel
that it is so. |

Sure as the most certain sure plumb in the uprights,
well entretied, braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul and clear and sweet is
all that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both and the unseen is proved by
the seen,
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst, age vexes
age,
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while
they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire my-
self.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any
man hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none
shall be less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied I see, dance, laugh, sing;
As God comes a loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side
all night and close on the peep of the day,
And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels
bulging the house with their plenty,
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream
at my eyes,
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,
Exactly the contents of one, and exactly the contents of
two, and which is ahead?

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet the effect upon me of my early life
 of the ward and city I live in of the
 nation,
The latest news discoveries, inventions, societies
 authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, business, compliments,
 dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman
 I love,
The sickness of one of my folks—or of myself or
 ill-doing or loss or lack of money or de-
 pressions or exaltations,
They come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
Looks down, is erect, bends an arm on an impalpable
 certain rest,
Looks with its sidecurved head curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering
 at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through
 fog with linguists and contenders,
I have no mockings or arguments I witness and wait.

I believe in you my soul the other I am must not
 abase itself to you,
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass loose the stop from your
 throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want not custom
 or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

I mind how we lay in June, such a transparent summer
 morning;

You settled your head athwart my hips and gently turned
over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged
your tongue to my barestript heart,
And reached till you felt my beard, and reached till you
held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and joy and
knowledge that pass all the art and argument of the
earth;
And I know that the hand of God is the elderhand of my
own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the eldest brother
of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers
and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love;
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the wormfence, and heaped stones, and
elder and mullen and pokeweed.

A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full
hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what
it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful
green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we
may see and remark, and say Whose?

Or I guess the grass is itself a child the produced
babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow
zones,

Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the
same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them;
It may be you are from old people and from women, and
from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old
mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues!
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths
for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men
and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring
taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and
children?

They are alive and well somewhere;
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait
at the end to arrest it,
And ceased the moment life appeared.

All goes onward and outward . . . and nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and
luckier

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die,
and I know it.

I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new-washed
babe and am not contained between my hat
and boots,

And peruse manifold objects, no two alike, and every one
good,

The earth good, and the stars good, and their adjuncts all
good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as im-
mortal and fathomless as myself;
They do not know how immortal, but I know.

Every kind for itself and its own for me mine male
and female,

For me all that have been boys and that love women,
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to
be slighted,

For me the sweetheart and the old maid for me
mothers and the mothers of mothers,

For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,
For me children and the begetters of children.

Who need be afraid of the merge?
Undrape you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor
discarded,

I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless and
can never be shaken away.

The little one sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush
away flies with my hand.

The youngster and the redfaced girl turn aside up the bushy
hill,

I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
It is so I witnessed the corpse there the pistol
had fallen.

The blab of the pave the tires of carts and sluff of
bootsoles and talk of the promenaders,

The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating
thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite
floor,

The carnival of sleighs, the clinking and shouted jokes and
pelts of snowballs;

The hurrahs for popular favorites the fury of roused
mobs,

The flap of the curtained litter—the sick man inside, borne
to the hospital,

The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and
fall,

The excited crowd—the policeman with his star quickly
working his passage to the centre of the crowd;

The impressive stones that receive and return so many
echoes,

The souls moving along are they invisible while the
least atom of the stones is visible?

What groans of overfed or half-starved who fall on the flags
sunstruck or in fits,

What exclamations of women taken suddenly, who hurry
home and give birth to babes,

What living and buried speech is always vibrating here
. . . . what howls restrained by decorum,

Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, accept-
ances, rejections with convex lips,

I mind them or the resonance of them I come again
and again.

The big doors of the country-barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn
wagon,

The clear light plays on the brown gray and green inter-
tinged,

The armfuls are packed to the sagging mow:
I am there I help I came stretched atop of
the load,
I felt its soft jolts one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the crossbeams, and seize the clover and
timothy,
And roll head over heels, and tangle my hair full of wisps.

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,
Kindling a fire and broiling the freshkilled game,
Soundly falling asleep on the gathered leaves, my dog and
gun by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her threeskysails she
cuts the sparkle and scud,
My eyes settle the land I bend at her prow or shout
joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clamdiggers arose early and stopped for
me,
I tucked my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had
a good time,
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-
kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the
far-west the bride was a red girl,
Her father and his friends sat near by crosslegged and
dumbly smoking they had moccasins to their
feet and large thick blankets hanging from their
shoulders;
On a bank lounged the trapper he was dressed mostly
in skins his luxuriant beard and curls protected
his neck,
One hand rested on his rifle the other hand held
firmly the wrist of the red girl,
She had long eyelashes her head was bare her
coarse straight locks descended upon her voluptuous
limbs and reached to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopped outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him
limpsey and weak,
And went where he sat on a log, and led him in and as-
sured him,
And brought water and filled a tub for his sweated body
and bruised feet,
And gave him a room that entered from my own, and gave
him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his
awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck
and ankles;
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and
passed north,
I had him sit next me at table . . . my firelock leaned
in the corner.

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,
Twenty-eight young men, and all so friendly,
Twenty-eight years of womanly life, and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the
window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your
room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-
ninth bather,

The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glistened with wet, it ran
from their long hair,

Little streams passed all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also passed over their bodies,
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies
swell to the sun they do not ask who seizes
fast to them,

They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant
and bending arch,

They do not think whom they souse with spray.

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his
knife at the stall in the market,

I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and breakdown.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,
Each has his main-sledge they are all out there
is a great heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strewed threshold I follow their move-
ments,

The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive
arms,

Overhand the hammers roll—overhand so slow—overhand
so sure,

They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses
the block swags underneath on its tied-over chain,

The negro that drives the huge dray of the stoneyard
steady and tall he stands poised on one leg on the
stringpiece,

His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and
loosens over his hipband,

His glance is calm and commanding he tosses the
slouch of his hat away from his forehead,

The sun falls on his crispy hair and moustache falls
on the black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him and I
do not stop there,

I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving . . . backward
as well as forward slueing,
To niches aside and junior bending.

Oxen that rattle the yoke or halt in the shade, what is
that you express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my
life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant
and daylong ramble,
They rise together, they slowly circle around.
. . . . I believe in those winged purposes,
And acknowledge the red yellow and white playing within
me,
And consider the green and violet and the tufted crown
intentional;
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not
something else,
And the mocking bird in the swamp never studied the
gamut, yet trills pretty well to me,
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,
Ya-honk! he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation;
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listen closer,
I find its purpose and place up there toward the November
sky.

The sharpfooted moose of the north, the cat on the house-
sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,
The brood of the turkeyhen, and she with her halfspread
wings,
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred
affections,
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamoured of growing outdoors,
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or
woods,
Of the builders and steerers of ships, of the wielders of
axes and mauls, of the drivers of horses,
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest and cheapest and nearest and easiest
is Me,
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will
take me,
Not asking the sky to come down to my goodwill,
Scattering it freely forever.

The pure contralto sings in the organloft,
The carpenter dresses his plank . . . the tongue of his
foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their
thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong
arm,
The mate stands braced in the whaleboat, lance and har-
poon are ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
The deacons are ordained with crossed hands at the altar,
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the
big wheel,
The farmer stops by the bars of a Sunday and looks at
the oats and rye,
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirmed case,
He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his
mother's bedroom;
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at
his case,
He turns his quid of tobacco, his eyes get blurred with the
manuscript;
The malformed limbs are tied to the anatomist's table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;

The quadroon girl is sold at the stand the drunkard
nods by the barroom stove,
The machinist rolls up his sleeves the policeman
travels his beat the gatekeeper marks who pass,
The young fellow drives the express-wagon I love
him though I do not know him;
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the
race,
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young
some lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman and takes his posi-
tion and levels his piece;
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or
levee,
The woollypates hoe in the sugarfield, the overseer views
them from his saddle;
The bugle calls in the ballroom, the gentlemen run for their
partners, the dancers bow to each other;
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roofed garret and harks
to the musical rain,
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the
Huron,
The reformer ascends the platform, he spouts with his
mouth and nose,
The company returns from its excursion, the darkey brings
up the rear and bears the well-riddled target,
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemmed cloth is offering
moccasins and beadbags for sale,
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with
halfshut eyes bent sideways,
The deckhands make fast the steamboat, the plank is
thrown for the shoregoing passengers,
The young sister holds out the skein, the elder sister winds
it off in a ball and stops now and then for the knots,
The one-year wife is recovering and happy, a week ago she
bore her first child,
The cleanhaired Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine
or in the factory or mill,
The nine months' gone is in the parturition chamber, her
faintness and pains are advancing;

The pavingman leans on his twohanded rammer—the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the notebook—the sign-painter is lettering with red and gold,
The canal-boy trots on the towpath—the bookkeeper counts at his desk—the shoemaker waxes his thread,
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,
The child is baptised—the convert is making the first professions,
The regatta is spread on the bay how the white sails sparkle!
The drover watches his drove, he sings out to them that would stray,
The pedlar sweats with his pack on his back—the purchaser higgles about the odd cent,
The camera and plate are prepared, the lady must sit for her daguerreotype,
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minutehand of the clock moves slowly,
The opium eater reclines with rigid head and just-opened lips,
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you,)
The President holds a cabinet council, he is surrounded by the great secretaries,
On the piazza walk five friendly matrons with twined arms;
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,
The fare-collector goes through the train—he gives notice by the jingling of loose change,
The floormen are laying the floor—the tinnerns are tinning the roof—the masons are calling for mortar,
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers;
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is

gathered it is the Fourth of July what
salutes of cannon and small arms!
Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs and the
mower mows and the wintergrain falls in the ground;
Off on the lakes the pikefisher watches and waits by the
hole in the frozen surface,
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter
strikes deep with his axe,
The flatboatmen make fast toward dusk near the cotton-
wood or pekantrees,
The coon-seekers go now through the regions of the Red
river, or through those drained by the Tennessee, or
through those of the Arkansas,
The torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahoo-
chee or Altamahaw;
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great
grandsons around them,
In walls of abode, in canvass tents, rest hunters and trap-
pers after their day's sport.
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
The living sleep for their time the dead sleep for
their time,
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband
sleeps by his wife;
And these one and all tend inward to me, and I tend out-
ward to them,
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am.

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,
Stuffed with the stuff that is coarse, and stuffed with the
stuff that is fine,
One of the great nations, the nation of many nations—the
smallest the same and the largest the same,
A southerner soon as a northerner, a planter nonchalant and
hospitable,
A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade
my joints the limberest joints on earth and the sternest
joints on earth,

A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-
skin leggings,
A boatman over the lakes or bays or along coasts a
Hoosier, a Badger, a Buckeye,
A Louisianian or Georgian, a poke-easy from sandhills and
pines,
At home on Canadian snowshoes or up in the bush, or
with fishermen off Newfoundland,
At home in the fleet of iceboats, sailing with the rest and
tacking,
At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine
or the Texan ranch,
Comrade of Californians comrade of free northwest-
erners, loving their big proportions,
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen—comrade of all who
shake hands and welcome to drink and meat;
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,
A novice beginning experient of myriads of seasons,
Of every hue and trade and rank, of every caste and religion,
Not merely of the New World but of Africa Europe or
Asia a wandering savage,
A farmer, mechanic, or artist a gentleman, sailor,
lover or quaker,
A prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician or priest.

I resist anything better than my own diversity,
And breathe the air and leave plenty after me,
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

The moth and the fisheggs are in their place,
The suns I see and the suns I cannot see are in their place,
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its
place.

These are the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,
they are not original with me,
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing or
next to nothing,
If they do not enclose everything they are next to nothing,

If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle
they are nothing,
If they are not just as close as they are distant they are
nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the
water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe.

This is the breath of laws and songs and behaviour,
This is the tasteless water of souls . . . this is the true
sustenance,
It is for the illiterate . . . it is for the judges of the
supreme court . . . it is for the federal capitol and
the state capitol,
It is for the admirable communes of literary men and
composers and singers and lecturers and engineers and
savans,
It is for the endless races of working people and farmers
and seamen.

This is the trill of a thousand clear cornets and scream of
the octave flute and strike of triangles.

I play not a march for victors only . . . I play great
marches for conquered and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall . . . battles are lost in the
same spirit in which they are won.

I sound triumphal drums for the dead . . . I fling
through my embouchures the loudest and gayest music
to them,
Vivas to those who have failed, and to those whose war-
vessels sank in the sea, and those themselves who sank
in the sea,
And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome
heroes, and the numberless unknown heroes equal to
the greatest heroes known.

This is the meal pleasantly set this is the meat and
drink for natural hunger,
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous
I make appointments with all,
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The keptwoman and sponger and thief are hereby invited
. . . . the heavy-lipped slave is invited the
venerealee is invited,
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand this is the float
and odor of hair,
This is the touch of my lips to yours this is the
murmur of yearning,
This is the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
This is the thoughtful merge of myself and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
Well I have for the April rain has, and the mica
on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?
Does the daylight astonish? or the early redstart twittering
through the woods?
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,
I might not tell everybody but I will tell you.

Who goes therel hankering, gross, mystical, nude?
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? What am I? and what are you?
All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and
filth,
That life is a suck and a sell, and nothing remains at the
end but threadbare crape and tears.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids
 . . . conformity goes to the fourth-removed,
I cock my hat as I please indoors or out.

Shall I pray? Shall I venerate and be ceremonious?

I have pried through the strata and analyzed to a hair,
And counselled with doctors and calculated close and found
 no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-
 corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

And I know I am solid and sound,
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually
 flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing
 means.

And I know I am deathless,
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's
 compass,
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a
 burnt stick at night.

I know I am august,
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be under-
 stood,
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,
I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my
 house by after all.

I exist as I am, that is enough,
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware, and by far the largest to me, and that
 is myself,
And whether I come to my own today or in ten thousand
 or ten million years,

I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I
can wait.

My foothold is tenoned and mortised in granite,
I laugh at what you call dissolution,
And I know the amplitude of time.

I am the poet of the body,
And I am the poet of the soul.

The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell
are with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself . . . the latter
I translate into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant a new chant of dilation or pride,
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,
I show that size is only developement.

Have you outstript the rest? Are you the President?
It is a trifle . . . they will more than arrive there every
one, and still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night;
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close barebosomed night! Press close magnetic nour-
ishing night!
Night of south winds! Night of the large few stars!
Still nodding night! Mad naked summer night!

Smile O voluptuous coolbreathed earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset! Earth of the mountains misty-
topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged
with blue!

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for
my sake!

Far-swooping elbowed earth! Rich apple-blossomed earth!
Smile, for your lover comes!

Prodigal! you have given me love! . . . therefore I to you
give love!

O unspeakable passionate love!

Thruster holding me tight and that I hold tight!
We hurt each other as the bridegroom and the bride hurt
each other.

You seal I resign myself to you also I guess what
you mean,

I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me;
We must have a turn together I undress hurry
me out of sight of the land,

Cushion me soft rock me in billowy drowse,
Dash me with amorous wet I can repay you.

Sea of stretched ground-swells!

Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths!

Sea of the brine of life! Sea of unshovelled and always-
ready graves!

Howler and scooper of storms! Capricious and dainty seal!
I am integral with you I too am of one phase and
of all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux extoler of hate and
conciliation,

Extoler of amies and those that sleep in each others' arms.

I am he attesting sympathy;

Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the
house that supports them?

I am the poet of commonsense and of the demonstrable
and of immortality;

And am not the poet of goodness only I do not
decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

Washes and razors for foofoos for me freckles and
a bristling beard.

What blurt is it about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me, and reform of evil propels me I
stand indifferent,
My gait is no faultfinder's or rejecter's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging preg-
nancy?
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be worked over
and rectified?

I step up to say that what we do is right and what we
affirm is right and some is only the ore of right,
Witnesses of us one side a balance and the antip-
odal side a balance,
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early
start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well today is
not such a wonder,
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean
man or an infidel.

Endless unfolding of words of ages!
And mine a word of the modern a word en masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,
One time as good as another time here or hence-
forward it is all the same to me.

A word of reality materialism first and last imbueing.

Hurrah for positive sciencel Lone live exact demonstration!
Fetch stonecrop and mix it with cedar and branches of
lilac;

This is the lexicographer or chemist this made a
grammar of the old cartouches,

These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown
seas,

This is the geologist, and this works with the scalpel, and
this is a mathematician.

Gentlemen I receive you, and attach and clasp hands with
you,

The facts are useful and real they are not my
dwelling I enter by them to an area of the
dwelling.

I am less the reminder of property or qualities, and more
the reminder of life,

And go on the square for my own sake and for other's sake,
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor
men and women fully equipped,

And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and
them that plot and conspire.

Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a
kosmos,

Disorderly fleshy and sensual eating drinking and
breeding,

No sentimentalist no stander above men and women
or apart from them no more modest than
immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!

Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whatever degrades another degrades me and what-
ever is done or said returns at last to me,

And whatever I do or say I also return.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging through
me the current and index.

I speak the password primeval I give the sign of
democracy;

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their
counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of slaves,
Voices of prostitutes and of deformed persons,
Voices of the diseased and despairing, and of thieves and
dwarfs,

Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars—and of wombs,
and of the fatherstuff,

And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the trivial and flat and foolish and despised,
Of fog in the air and beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts voices veiled, and I remove
the veil,

Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured.

I do not press my finger across my mouth,
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head
and heart,

Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing hearing and feeling are miracles, and each part and
tag of me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I
touch or am touched from;

The scent of these arm-pits is aroma finer than prayer,
This head is more than churches or bibles or creeds.

If I worship any particular thing it shall be some of the
spread of my body;

Translucent mould of me it shall be you,
Shaded ledges and rests, firm masculine coulters, it shall be
you,
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you,
You my rich blood, your milky stream pale strippings of
my life;
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you,
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions,
Root of washed sweet-flag, timorous pond-snipe, nest of
guarded duplicate eggs, it shall be you,
Mixed tussled hay of head and beard and brawn it shall
be you,
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be
you;
Sun so generous it shall be you,
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you,
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you,
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall
be you,
Broad muscular fields, branches of liveoak, loving lounge
in my winding paths, it shall be you,
Hands I have taken, face I have kissed, mortal I have ever
touched, it shall be you.

I dote on myself . . . there is that lot of me, and all so
luscious,
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy.

I cannot tell how my ankles bend . . . nor whence the
cause of my faintest wish,
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit . . . nor the cause
of the friendship I take again.

To walk up my stoop is unaccountable . . . I pause to
consider if it really be,
That I eat and drink is spectacle enough for the great
authors and schools,
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the
metaphysics of books.

To behold the daybreak!
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols, silently
rising, freshly exuding,
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with . . . the daily close of
their junction,
The heaved challenge from the east that moment over my
head,
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sunrise would kill
me,
If I could not now and always send sunrise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,
We found our own my soul in the calm and cool of the
daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and
volumes of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision . . . it is unequal to
measure itself.

It provokes me forever,
It says sarcastically, Walt, you understand enough . . .
why don't you let it out then?

Come now I will not be tantalized . . . you conceive too
much of articulation.

Do you not know how the buds beneath are folded?
Waiting in gloom protected by frost,
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,
I underlying causes to balance them at last,
My knowledge my live parts it keeping tally with
the meaning of things,
Happiness which whoever hears me let him or her
set out in search of this day.

My final merit I refuse you I refuse putting from
me the best I am.

Encompass worlds but never try to encompass me,
I crowd your noisiest talk by looking toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my
face,
With the hush of my lips I confound the topmost skeptic.

I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen,
And accrue what I hear into myself and let sounds
contribute toward me.

I hear the bravuras of birds the bustle of growing
wheat gossip of flames clack of sticks
cooking my meals.

I hear the sound of the human voice a sound I love,
I hear all the sounds as they are tuned to their uses
sounds of the city and sounds out of the city
sounds of the day and night;

Talkative young ones to those that like them the
recitative of fish-pedlars and fruit-pedlars the
loud laugh of workpeople at their meals,
The angry base of disjointed friendship the faint
tones of the sick,

The judge with hands tight to the desk, his shaky lips pro-
nouncing a death-sentence,

The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves
. . . . the refrain of the anchor-lifters;

The ring of alarm-bells the cry of fire the
whirr of swift-streaking engines and hose-carts with
premonitory tinkles and colored lights,
The steam-whistle the solid roll of the train of
approaching cars;
The slow-march played at night at the head of the associa-
tion,
They go to guard some corpse the flag-tops are
draped with black muslin.

I hear the violincello or man's heart's complaint,
And hear the keyed cornet or else the echo of sunset.

I hear the chorus it is a grand-opera this
indeed is music!

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the trained soprano she convulses me like the
climax of my love-grip;
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,
It wrenches unnamable ardors from my breast,
It throbs me to gulps of the farthest down horror,
It sails me I dab with bare feet they are
licked by the indolent waves,
I am exposed cut by bitter and poisoned hail,
Steeped amid honeyed morphine my windpipe
squeezed in the fakes of death,
Let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,
And that we call Being.

To be in any form, what is that?
If nothing lay more developed the quahaug and its callous
shell were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or
stop,
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as
I can stand.

Is this then a touch? . . . quivering me to a new identity,
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
Treachorous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
My flesh and blood playing out lightning, to strike what is
hardly different from myself,

On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,
Unbuttoning my clothes and holding me by the bare waist,
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and
pasture fields,

Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
They bribed to swap off with touch, and go and graze at
the edges of me,

No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my
anger,

Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them awhile,
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

The sentries desert every other part of me,
They have left me helpless to a red marauder,
They all come to the headland to witness and assist against
me.

I am given up by traitors;
I talk wildly . . . I have lost my wits . . . I and nobody
else am the greatest traitor,
I went myself first to the headland . . . my own hands
carried me there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? . . . my breath
is tight in its throat;

Unclench your floodgates! you are too much for me.

Blind loving wrestling touch! Sheathed hooded sharp-
toothed touch!

Did it make you ache so leaving me?

Parting tracked by arriving perpetual payment of the
perpetual loan,

Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate stand by the curb
prolific and vital,

Landscapes projected masculine full-sized and golden.

All truths wait in all things,

They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,

They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,

The insignificant is as big to me as any,

What is less or more than a touch?

Logic and sermons never convince,

The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,
Only what nobody denies is so.

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain;

I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,

And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or
woman,

And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for
each other,

And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until
it becomes omnific,

And until every one shall delight us, and we them.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journeywork of
the stars,

And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand,
and the egg of the wren,

And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest,

And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of
heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all
machinery,
And the cow crunching with depressed head surpasses any
statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of
infidels,
And I could come every afternoon of my life to look at the
farmer's girl boiling her iron tea-kettle and baking
shortcake.

I find I incorporate gneiss and coal and long-threaded moss
and fruits and grains and esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
And call any thing close again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my
approach,
In vain the mastadon retreats beneath its own powdered
bones,
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold
shapes,
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters
lying low,
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,
In vain the razorbilled auk sails far north to Labrador,
I follow quickly . . . I ascend to the nest in the fissure
of the cliff.

I think I could turn and live awhile with the animals . . .
they are so placid and self-contained,
I stand and look at them sometimes half the day long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied . . . not one is demented with the
mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another nor to his kind that lived thou-
sands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth.

So they shōw their relations to me and I accept them;
They bring me tokens of myself . . . they evince them
plainly in their possession.

I do not know where they got those tokens,
I must have passed that way untold times ago and negli-
gently dropt them,
Myself moving forward then and now and forever,
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,
Infinite and omnigenous and the like of these among them;
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remem-
brancers,
Picking out here one that shall be my amie,
Choosing to go with him on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my
caresses,
Head high in the forehead and wide between the ears,
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,
Eyes well apart and full of sparkling wickedness . . . ears
finely cut and flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate . . . my heels embrace him . . . his
well built limbs tremble with pleasure . . . we
speed around and return.

I but use you a moment and then I resign you stallion
. . . and do not need your paces, and outgallop
them,
And myself as I stand or sit pass faster than you.

Swift wind! Space! My Soul! Now I know it is true what
I guessed at;

What I guessed when I loafed on the grass,
What I guessed while I lay alone in my bed and
again as I walked the beach under the paling stars of
the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me I travel I sail
. . . . my elbows rest in the sea-gaps,
I skirt the sierras my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses in log-huts, or
camping with lumbermen,
Along the ruts of the turnpike along the dry gulch
and rivulet bed,
Hoeing my onion-patch, and rows of carrots and parsnips
. . . . crossing savannas trailing in forests,
Prospecting gold-digging girdling the trees of
a new purchase,
Scorched ankle-deep by the hot sand hauling my
boat down the shallow river;
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead
. . . . where the buck turns furiously at the hunter,
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock
. . . . where the otter is feeding on fish,
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the
bayou,
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey
where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-tail;
Over the growing sugar over the cottonplant
over the rice in its low moist field;
Over the sharp-peaked farmhouse with its scalloped scum
and slender shoots from the gutters;
Over the western persimmon over the longleaved
corn and the delicate blueflowered flax;
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and a
buzzer there with the rest,
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades
in the breeze;
Scaling mountains pulling myself cautiously up
. . . . holding on by low scragged limbs,

Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the
leaves of the brush;
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the
wheatlot,
Where the bat flies in the July eve where the great
goldbug drops through the dark;
Where the flails keep time on the barn floor,
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and
flows to the meadow,
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremu-
lous shuddering of their hides,
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, and andirons
straddle the hearth-slab, and cobwebs fall in festoons
from the rafters;
Where triphammers crash where the press is whirl-
ing its cylinders;
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes out
of its ribs;
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft
floating in it myself and looking composedly down;
Where the life-car is drawn on the slipnoose where
the heat hatches palegreen eggs in the dented sand,
Where the she-whale swims with her calves and never for-
sakes them,
Where the steamship trails hindways its long pennant of
smoke,
Where the ground-shark's fin cuts like a black chip out of
the water,
Where the half-burned brig is riding on unknown currents,
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, and the dead are
corrupting below;
Where the striped and starred flag is borne at the head of
the regiments;
Approaching Manhattan, up by the long-stretching island,
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my
countenance;
Upon a door-step upon the horse-block of hard wood
outside,
Upon the race-course, or enjoying pic-nics or jigs or a good
game of base-ball,

At he-festivals with blackguard jibes and ironical license
and bull-dances and drinking and laughter,
At the cider-mill, tasting the sweet of the brown squish
. . . . sucking the juice through a straw,
At apple-pealings, wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,
At musters and beach-parties and friendly bees and husk-
ings and house-raising;
Where the mockingbird sounds his delicious gurgles, and
cackles and screams and weeps,
Where the hay-rick stands in the barnyard, and the dry-
stalks are scattered, and the brood cow waits in the
hovel,
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, and
the stud to the mare, and the cock is treading the hen,
Where the heifers browse, and the geese nip their food
with short jerks;
Where the sundown shadows lengthen over the limitless
and lonesome prairie,
Where the herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the
square miles far and near;
Where the hummingbird shimmers where the neck
of the longlived swan is curving and winding;
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the slappy shore and
laughs her near-human laugh;
Where beehives range on a gray bench in the garden half-
hid by the high weeds;
Where the band-necked partridges roost in a ring on the
ground with their heads out;
Where burial coaches enter the arched gates of a ceme-
tery;
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and iced
trees;
Where the yellow-crowned heron comes to the edge of the
marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs;
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cool the warm
noon;
Where the katydid works her chromatic reed on the
walnut-tree over the well;
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-
wired leaves,

Through the salt-lick or orange glade or under
conical furs;
Through the gymnasium through the curtained
saloon through the office or public hall;
Pleased with the native and pleased with the foreign
pleased with the new and old,
Pleased with women, the homely as well as the handsome,
Pleased with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and
talks melodiously,
Pleased with the primitive tunes of the choir of the white-
washed church,
Pleased with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist
preacher, or any preacher looking seriously at
the camp-meeting;
Looking in at the shop-windows in Broadway the whole
forenoon pressing the flesh of my nose to the
thick plate-glass,
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turned up to
the clouds;
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends and I
in the middle;
Coming home with the bearded and dark-cheeked bush-boy
. . . . riding behind him at the drape of the day;
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals'
feet, or the moccasin print;
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish
patient,
By the coffined corpse when all is still, examining with a
candle;
Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure;
Hurrying with the modern crowd, as eager and fickle as any,
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him;
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone
from me a long while,
Walking the old hills of Judea with the beautiful gentle
god by my side;
Speeding through space speeding through heaven
and the stars,
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring and
the diameter of eighty thousand miles,

Speeding with tailed meteors throwing fire-balls like
the rest,

Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother
in its belly:

Storming enjoying planning loving cautioning,
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of God and look at the spheric product,
And look at quintillions ripened, and look at quintillions
green.

I fly the flight of the fluid and swallowing soul,
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,
No guard can shut me off, no law can prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their
returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal leaping chasms
with a pike-pointed staff clinging to topples of
brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck I take my place late at
night in the crow's nest we sail through the
arctic sea it is plenty light enough,

Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the won-
derful beauty,

The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them
the scenery is plain in all directions,

The white-topped mountains point up in the distance
. . . . I fling out my fancies toward them;

We are about approaching some great battlefield in which
we are soon to be engaged,

We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment
we pass with still feet and caution;

Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruined
city the blocks and fallen architecture more
than all the living cities of the globe.

I am a free companion I bivouac by invading watch-
fires.

I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride
myself,
And tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the
stairs,
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drowned.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,
The courage of present times and all times;
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of
the steamship, and death chasing it up and down the
storm,
How he knuckled tight and gave not back one inch, and
was faithful of days and faithful of nights,
And chalked in large letters on a board, Be of good cheer,
We will not desert you;
How he saved the drifting company at last,
How the lank loose-gowned women looked when boated
from the side of their prepared graves,
How the silent old-faced infants, and the lifted sick, and
the sharp-lipped unshaved men;
All this I swallow and it tastes good I like it well,
and it becomes mine,
I am the man I suffered I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,
The mother condemned for a witch and burnt with dry
wood, and her children gazing on;
The hounded slave that flags in the race and leans by the
fence, blowing and covered with sweat,
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck,
The murderous buckshot and the bullets,
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave I wince at the bite of the
dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me crack and again crack
the marksmen,
I clutch the rails of the fence my gore dribs thinned
with the ooze of my skin,
I fall on the weeds and stones,
The riders spur their unwilling horses and haul close,
They taunt my dizzy ears they beat me violently
over the head with their whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments;
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels I
myself become the wounded person,
My hurt turns livid upon me as I lean on a cane and
observe.

I am the mashed fireman with breastbone broken
tumbling walls buried me in their debris,
Heat and smoke I inspired I heard the yelling shouts
of my comrades,
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels;
They have cleared the beams away they tenderly
lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt the pervading
hush is for my sake,
Painless after all I lie, exhausted but not so unhappy,
White and beautiful are the faces around me the
heads are bared of their firecaps,
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me
and I am the clock myself.

I am an old artilleryist, and tell of some fort's bombardment
. . . . and am there again.

Again the reveille of drummers again the attacking
cannon and mortars and howitzers,
Again the attacked send their cannon responsive.

I take part I see and hear the whole,
The cries and curses and roar the plaudits for well
aimed shots,
The ambulanza slowly passing and trailing its red drip,
Workmen searching after damages and to make indispen-
sible repairs,
The fall of grenades through the rent roof the fan-
shaped explosion,
The whizz of limbs heads stone wood and iron high in the
air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general he
furiously waves with his hand,
He gasps through the clot Mind not me mind
. . . . the entrenchments.

I tell not the fall of Alamo not one escaped to tell
the fall of Alamo,
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo.

Hear now the tale of a jetblack sunrise,
Hear of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and
twelve young men.

Retreating they had formed in a hollow square with their
baggage for breastworks,
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's nine
times their number was the price they took in advance,
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,
They treated for an honorable capitulation, received writ-
ing and seal, gave up their arms, and marched back
prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,
Matchless with a horse, a rifle, a song, a supper or a court-
ship,

Large, turbulent, brave, handsome, generous, proud and affectionate,
Bearded, sunburnt, dressed in the free costume of hunters,
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second Sunday morning they were brought out in squads and massacred . . . it was beautiful early summer,
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight.

None obeyed the command to kneel,
Some made a mad and helpless rush . . . some stood stark and straight,
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart . . . the living and dead lay together,
The maimed and mangled dug in the dirt . . . the newcomers saw them there;
Some half-killed attempted to crawl away,
These were dispatched with bayonets or battered with the blunts of muskets;
A youth not seventeen years old seized his assassin till two more came to release him,
The three were all torn, and covered with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;
And that is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men,
And that was a jetblack sunrise.

Did you read in the seabooks of the oldfashioned frigate-fight?
Did you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?

Our foe was no skulk in his ship, I tell you,
His was the English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer,
and never was, and never will be;
Along the lowered eve he came, horribly raking us.

We closed with him . . . the yards entangled . . . the
cannon touched,

My captain lashed fast with his own hands.

We had received some eighteen-pound shots under the
water,

On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the
first fire, killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Ten o'clock at night, and the full moon shining and the
leaks on the gain, and five feet of water reported,

The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the
after-hold to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine was now stopped
by the sentinels,

They saw so many strange faces they did not know whom
to trust.

Our frigate was afire . . . the other asked if we demanded
quarters? if our colors were struck and the fighting
done?

I laughed content when I heard the voice of my little cap-
tain,

We have not struck, he composedly cried, We have just
begun our part of the fighting.

Only three guns were in use,

One was directed by the captain himself against the
enemy's mainmast,

Two well-served with grape and canister silenced his
musketry and cleared his decks.

The tops alone seconded the fire of this little battery,
especially the maintop,

They all held out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,

The leaks gained fast on the pumps . . . the fire eat
toward the powder-magazine,

One of the pumps was shot away . . . it was generally
thought we were sinking.

Serene stood the little captain,
He was not hurried . . . his voice was neither high nor
low,
His eyes gave more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve at night, there in the beams of the moon
they surrendered to us.

Stretched and still lay the midnight,
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking . . . preparations
to pass to the one we had conquered,
The captain on the quarter deck coldly giving his orders
through a countenance white as a sheet,
Near by the corpse of the child that served in the cabin,
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and care-
fully curled whiskers,
The flames spite of all that could be done flickering aloft
and below,
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for
duty,
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves . . .
dabs of flesh upon the masts and spars,
The cut of cordage and dangle of rigging . . . the slight
shock of the soothe of waves,
Black and impressive guns, and litter of powder-parcels,
and the strong scent,
Delicate sniffs of the seabreeze . . . smells of sedgy grass
and fields by the shore . . . death-messages given in
charge to survivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife and the gnawing teeth of
his saw,
The wheeze, the cluck, the swash of falling blood . . .
the short wild scream, the long dull tapering groan,
These so . . . these irretrievable.

O Christ! My fit is mastering me!
What the rebel said gaily adjusting his throat to the rope-
noose,
What the savage at the stump, his eye-sockets empty, his
mouth spirting whoops and defiance,
What stills the traveler come to the vault at Mount Ver-
non,
What sobers the Brooklyn boy as he looks down the shores
of the Wallabout and remembers the prison ships,
What burnt the gums of the redcoat at Saratoga when he
surrendered his brigades,
These become mine and me every one, and they are but
little,
I become as much more as I like.

I become any presence or truth of humanity here,
And see myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and
keep watch,
It is I let out in the morning and barred at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuffed to the jail, but I am hand-
cuffed to him and walk by his side,
I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with
sweat on my twitching lips.

Not a youngster is taken for larceny, but I go up too and
am tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp, but I also lie
at the last gasp,
My face is ash-colored, my sinews gnarl . . . away from
me people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me, and I am embodied in
them,
I project my hat and sit shamefaced and beg.

I rise extatic through all, and sweep with the true gravitation,
The whirling and whirling is elemental within me.

Somehow I have been stunned. Stand back!
Give me a little time beyond my cuffed head and slumbers
and dreams and gaping,
I discover myself on a verge of the usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the
bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion and bloody crowning!

I remember I resume the overstaid fraction,
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it
. . . . or to any graves,
The corpses rise the gashes heal the fastenings roll away.

I troop forth replenished with supreme power, one of an
average unending procession,
We walk the roads of Ohio and Massachusetts and
Virginia and Wisconsin and New York and New
Orleans and Texas and Montreal and San Francisco
and Charleston and Savannah and Mexico,
Inland and by the seacoast and boundary lines and
we pass the boundary lines.

Our swift ordinances are on their way over the whole earth,
The blossoms we wear in our hats are the growth of two
thousand years.

Eleves I salute you,
I see the approach of your numberless gangs I see
you understand yourselves and me,
And know that they who have eyes are divine, and the
blind and lame are equally divine,
And that my steps drag behind yours yet go before them,

And are aware how I am with you no more than I am with
everybody.

The friendly and flowing savage Who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization or past it and mastering it?

Is he some southwesterner raised outdoors? Is he Canadian?

Is he from the Mississippi country? or from Iowa, Oregon
or California? or from the mountains? or prairie life
or bush-life? or from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,
They desire he should like them and touch them and
speak to them and stay with them.

Behaviour lawless as snow-flakes words simple as
grass uncombed head and laughter and naivete;
Slowstepping feet and the common features, and the
common modes and emanations,
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath
they fly out of the glance of his eyes.

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask lie over,
You light surfaces only I force the surfaces and the
depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,
Say old topknot! what do you want?

Man or woman! I might tell how I like you, but cannot,
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you,
but cannot,
And might tell the pinings I have the pulse of my
nights and days.

Behold I do not give lectures or a little charity,
What I give I give out of myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees, open your scarfed
chops till I blow grit within you,
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,
I am not to be denied I compel I have stores
plenty and to spare,
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are that is not important to
me,
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold
you.

To a drudge of the cottonfields or emptier of privies I lean
. . . . on his right cheek I put the family kiss,
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler
babes,
This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant
republics.

To any one dying thither I speed and twist the knob
of the door,
Turn the bedclothes toward the foot of the bed,
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man I raise him with resist-
less will.

O despairer, here is my neck,
By God! you shall not go down! Hang your whole weight
upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath I buoy you up;
Every room of the house do I fill with am armed force
. . . . lovers of me, bafflers of graves:
Sleep! I and they keep guard all night;
Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you,
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to my-
self,

And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell
you is so.

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their
backs,

And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,
Heard it and heard of several thousand years;
It is middling well as far as it goes . . . but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
The most they offer for mankind and eternity less than a
spirit of my own seminal wet,
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah and laying
them away,

Lithographing Kronos and Zeus his son, and Hercules his
grandson,

Buying drafts of Osiris and Isis and Belus and Brahma and
Adonai,

In my portfolio placing Manito loose, and Allah on a leaf,
and the crucifix engraved,

With Odin, and the hideous-faced Mexitli, and all idols
and images,

Honestly taking them all for what they are worth, and not
a cent more,

Admitting they were alive and did the work of their day,
Admitting they bore mites as for unfledged birds who have
now to rise and fly and sing for themselves,

Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in my-
self . . . bestowing them freely on each man and
woman I see,

Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,
Putting higher claims for him there with his rolled-up
sleeves, driving the mallet and chisel;

Not objecting to special revelations . . . considering a
curl of smoke or a hair on the back of my hand as
curious as any revelation;

Those ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes
more to me than the gods of the antique wars,
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charred laths
their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the
flames;

By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple inter-
ceding for every person born;

Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty
angels with shirts bagged out at their waists;

The snag-toothed hostler with red hair redeeming sins past
and to come,

Selling all he possesses and traveling on foot to fee lawyers
for his brother and sit by him while he is tried for
forgery:

What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod
about me, and not filling the square rod then;

The bull and the bug never worshipped half enough,

Dung and dirt more admirable than was dreamed,

The supernatural of no account myself waiting my
time to be one of the supremes,

The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good
as the best, and be as prodigious,

Guessing when I am it will not tickle me much to receive
puffs out of pulpit or print;

By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator!

Putting myself here and now to the ambushed womb of the
shadows!

. . . . A call in the midst of the crowd,
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

Come my children,

Come my boys and girls, and my women and household
and intimates,

Now the performer launches his nerve he has
passed his prelude on the reeds within.

Easily written loosefingered chords! I feel the thrum of
their climax and close.

My head evolves on my neck,
Music rolls, but not from the organ folks are around
me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard and unsunk ground,
Ever the eaters and drinkers ever the upward and
downward sun ever the air and the ceaseless
tides,
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing and wicked and
real,
Ever the old inexplicable query ever that thorned
thumb—that breath of itches and thirsts,
Ever the vexer's hoot! hoot! till we find where the sly one
hides and bring him forth;
Ever love ever the sobbing liquid of life,
Ever the bandage under the chin ever the tressels of
death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,
Tickets buying or taking or selling, but in to the feast never
once going;
Many sweating and ploughing and thrashing, and then the
chaff for payment receiving,
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claim-
ing.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens;
Whatever interests the rest interests me politics,
churches, newspapers, schools,
Benevolent societies, improvements, banks, tariffs, steam-
ships, factories, markets,
Stocks and stores and real estate and personal estate.

They who piddle and patter here in collars and tailed coats
. . . . I am aware who they are and that they
are not worms or fleas,
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself under all the
scrape-lipped and pipe-legged concealments.

The weakest and shallowest is deathless with me,
What I do and say the same waits for them,
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in
them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,
And know my omniverous words, and cannot say any less,
And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

My words are words of a questioning, and to indicate
reality;

This printed and bound book but the printer and
the printing-office boy?

The marriage estate and settlement but the body
and mind of the bridegroom? also those of the bride?

The panorama of the sea but the sea itself?

The well-taken photographs but your wife or friend
close and solid in your arms?

The fleet of ships of the line and all the modern improve-
ments but the craft and pluck of the admiral?

The dishes and fare and furniture but the host and
hostess, and the look out of their eyes?

The sky up there yet here or next door or across the
way?

The saints and sages in history but you yourself?

Sermons and creeds and theology but the human
brain, and what is called reason, and what is called
love, and what is called life?

I do not despise you priests;

My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing all worship ancient and modern, and all between
ancient and modern,

Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thou-
sand years,

Waiting responses from oracles honoring the gods
. . . . saluting the sun,

Making a fetish of the first rock or stump powowing
with sticks in the circle of obis,

Helping the lama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the
idols,

Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession
. . . . rapt and austere in the woods, a gymnosophist,

Drinking mead from the skull-cup to shasta and
vedas admirant minding the koran,

Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone
and knife—beating the serpent-skin drum;

Accepting the gospels, accepting him that was crucified,
knowing assuredly that he is divine,

To the mass kneeling—to the puritan's prayer rising—sitting
patiently in a pew,

Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis—waiting dead-like
till my spirit arouses me;

Looking forth on pavement and land, and outside of pave-
ment and land,

Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang,

I turn and talk like a man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters, dull and excluded,

Frivolous sullen moping angry affected disheartened atheis-
tical,

I know every one of you, and know the unspoken inter-
rogatories,

By experience I know them.

How the flukes splash!

How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and
spouts of blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,
I take my place among you as much as among any;

The past is the push of you and me and all precisely the
same,

And the day and night are for you and me and all,

And what is yet untried and afterward is for you and me
and all.

I do not know what is untried and afterwards,
But I know it is sure and alive and sufficient.

Each who passes is considered, and each who stops is considered,
and not a single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,
Nor the little child that peeped in at the door and then
drew back and was never seen again,
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels
it with bitterness worse than gall,
Nor him in the poorhouse tubercled by rum and the bad
disorder,
Nor the numberless slaughtered and wrecked nor the
brutish koboo, called the ordure of humanity,
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food
to slip in,
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of
the earth,
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor one of the
myriads of myriads that inhabit them,
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

It is time to explain myself let us stand up.

What is known I strip away I launch all men and
women forward with me into the unknown.

The clock indicates the moment but what does
eternity indicate?

Eternity lies in bottomless reservoirs its buckets are
rising forever and ever,

They pour and they pour and they exhale away.

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and
summers;

There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you my brother
or my sister?

I am sorry for you they are not murderous or jealous
upon me;

All has been gentle with me I keep no account
with lamentation;

What have I to do with lamentation?

I am an acme of things accomplished, and I an encloser
of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between
the steps,

All below duly traveled—and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, the vapor from the
nostrils of death,

I know I was even there I waited unseen and always,
And slept while God carried me through the lethargic mist,
And took my time and took no hurt from the foetid
carbon.

Long I was hugged close long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful
boatmen;

For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid nothing could
overlay it;

For it the nebula cohered to an orb the long slow
strata piled to rest it on vast vegetables gave
it sustenance,

Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and
deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employed to complete and
delight me,

Now I stand on this spot with my soul.

Span of youth! Ever-pushed elasticity! Manhood balanced
and florid and full!

My lovers suffocate me!

Crowding my lips, and thick in the pores of my skin,
Jostling me through streets and public halls coming
naked to me at night,

Crying by day Ahoy from the rocks of the river
swinging and chirping over my head,

Calling my name from flowerbeds or vines or tangled
underbrush,

Or while I swim in the bath or drink from the pump
at the corner or the curtain is down at the opera
. . . . or I glimpse at a woman's face in the railroad
car;

Lighting on every moment of my life,

Bussing my body with soft and balsamic busses,

Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving
them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! Ineffable grace of dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself it pro-
mulges what grows after and out of itself,

And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,

And all I see, multiplied as high as I can cipher, edge but
the rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding and always ex-
panding,
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun, and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest in-
side them.

There is no stoppage, and never can be stoppage;
If I and you and the worlds and all beneath or upon their
surfaces, and all the palpable life, were this moment
reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in
the long run,
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And as surely go as much farther, and then farther and
farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues,
do not hazard the span, or make it impatient,
They are but parts any thing is but a part.

See ever so far there is limitless space outside of
that,
Count ever so much there is limitless time around
that.

Our rendezvous is fitly appointed God will be there
and wait till we come.

I know I have the best of time and space—and that I was
never measured, and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey,
My signs are a rain-proof coat and good shoes and a staff
cut from the woods;
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,

I have no chair, nor church nor philosophy;
I lead no man to a dinner-table or library or exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooks you round the waist,
My right hand points to landscapes of continents, and a
plain public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far . . . it is within reach,
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born, and did
not know,
Perhaps it is every where on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds, and I will mine, and let us hasten
forth;
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of
your hand on my hip,
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me;
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and looked at the
crowded heaven,
And I said to my spirit, When we become the enfolders
of those orbs and the pleasure and knowledge of
every thing in them, shall we be filled and satisfied
then?
And my spirit said No, we level that lift to pass and con-
tinue beyond.

You are also asking me questions, and I hear you;
I answer that I cannot answer . . . you must find out for
yourself.

Sit awhile wayfarer,
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,

But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes
I will certainly kiss you with my goodbye kiss and
open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dreamed contemptible dreams,
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of
every moment of your life

Long have you timidly waded, holding a plank by the shore,
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, and rise again and nod
to me and shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

I am the teacher of athletes,
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves
the width of my own,
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy
the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through de-
rived power but in his own right,
Wicked, rather than virtuous out of conformity of fear,
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than a wound
cuts,
First rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a
skiff, to sing a song or play on the banjo,
Preferring scars and faces pitted with smallpox over all
latherers and those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour;
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar, or to fill up the time
while I wait for a boat;
It is you talking just as much as myself I act as the
tongue of you,
It was tied in your mouth in mine it begins to be
loosened.

I swear I will never mention love or death inside a house,
And I swear I never will translate myself at all, only to him
or her who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-
shore,
The nearest gnat is an explanation and a drop or the motion
of waves a key,
The maul the oar and the handsaw second my words.

No shuttered room or school can commune with me,
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me he knows me
pretty well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall
take me with him all day,
The farmboy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound
of my voice,
In vessels that sail my words must sail I go with
fishermen and seamen, and love them,
My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone
in his blanket,
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his
wagon,
The young mother and old mother shall comprehend me,
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget
where they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them.

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's-self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to
his own funeral, dressed in his shroud,
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick
of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod con-
founds the learning of all times,

And there is no trade or employment but the young man
following it may become a hero,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the
wheeled universe,
And any man or woman shall stand cool and supercilious
before a million universes.

And I call to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about
God,
No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about
God and about death.

I hear and behold God in every object, yet I understand
God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful
than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and
each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own
face in the glass;
I find letters from God dropped in the street, and every
one is signed by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that others
will punctually come forever and ever.

And as to you death, and you bitter hug of mortality
it is idle to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,
I see the elderhand pressing receiving supporting,
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors
and mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you corpse I think you are good manure, but that
does not offend me,
I smell the white roses sweetscented and growing,

I reach to the leafy lips I reach to the polished
breasts of melons.

And as to you life, I reckon you are the leavings of many
deaths,

No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns O grass of graves O perpetual trans-
fers and promotions if you do not say anything
how can I say anything?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steep of the soughing
twilight,

Toss, sparkles of day and dusk toss on the black
stems that decay in the muck,

Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon I ascend from the night,
And perceive of the ghastly glitter the sunbeams reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring
great or small.

There is that in me I do not know what it is
but I know it is in me.

Wrenched and sweaty calm and cool then my body
becomes;

I sleep I sleep long.

I do not know it it is without name it is a
word unsaid,

It is not in any dictionary or utterance or symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes
me.

Perhaps I might tell more Outlines! I plead for my
brothers and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?

It is not chaos or death it is form and union and
plan it is eternal life it is happiness..

The past and present wilt I have filled them and
emptied them,

And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! Here you what have you to con-
fide to me?

Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,
Talk honestly, for no one else hears you, and I stay only
a minute longer.

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself;

I am large I contain multitudes.

I concentrate toward them that are nigh I wait on
the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work and will soonest be through
with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? Will you prove already
too late?

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me he com-
plains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the
shadowed wilds,

It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air I shake my white locks at the run-
away sun,

I effuse my flesh in eddies and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your bootsoles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop some where waiting for you

LEAVES OF GRASS

|

Come closer to me,
Push close my lovers and take the best I possess,
Yield closer and closer and give me the best you possess.

This is unfinished business with me how is it with
you?
I was chilled with the cold types and cylinder and wet pa-
per between us.

I pass so poorly with paper and types I must pass
with the contact of bodies and souls.

I do not thank you for liking me as I am, and liking the
touch of me I know that it is good for you to
do so.

Were all educations practical and ornamental well dis-
played out of me, what would it amount to?
Were I as the head teacher or charitable proprietor or wise
statesman, what would it amount to?
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would
that satisfy you?

The learned and virtuous and benevolent, and the usual
terms;
A man like me, and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master am I,
I take no sooner a large price than a small price I
 will have my own whoever enjoys me,
I will be even with you, and you shall be even with me.

If you are a workman or workwoman I stand as nigh as the
 nighest that works in the same shop,
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend, I demand as good as your brother or dearest friend,
If your lover or husband or wife is welcome by day or night,
 I must be personally as welcome;
If you have become degraded or ill, then I will become so
 for your sake;
If you remember your foolish and outlawed deeds, do you
 think I cannot remember my foolish and outlawed
 deeds?
If you carouse at the table I say I will carouse at the opposite side of the table;
If you meet some stranger in the street and love him or
 her, do I not often meet strangers in the street and
 love them?
If you see a good deal remarkable in me I see just as much
 remarkable in you.

Why what have you thought of yourself?
Is it you then that thought yourself less?
Is it you that thought the President greater than you? or the
 rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than
 you?

Because you are greasy or pimpled—or that you was once
 drunk, or a thief, or diseased, or rheumatic, or a prostitute—or are so now—or from frivolity or impotence
—or that you are no scholar, and never saw your name
in print do you give in that you are any less
immortal?

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard, untouchable and untouching;

It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle
whether you are alive or no;

I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns and
see and hear you, and what you give and take;

What is there you cannot give and take?

I see not merely that you are polite or whitefaced
married or single citizens of old states or citi-
zens of new states eminent in some profession
. . . . a lady or gentleman in a parlor or dressed
in the jail uniform or pulpit uniform,

Not only the free Utahan, Kansian, or Arkansian not
only the free Cuban . . . not merely the slave
not Mexican native, or Flatfoot, or negro from Africa,

Iroquois eating the warflesh—fishtearer in his lair of rocks
and sand Esquimaux in the dark cold snow-
house Chinese with his transverse eyes
Bedowee—or wandering nomad—or tabounschik at the
head of his droves,

Grown, half-grown, and babe—of this country and every
country, indoors and outdoors I see and all else
is behind or through them.

The wife—and she is not one jot less than the husband,
The daughter—and she is just as good as the son,
The mother—and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of those not rich—boys apprenticed to trades,
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working
on farms;

The naive the simple and hardy he going to
the polls to vote he who has a good time, and
he who has a bad time;

Mechanics, southerners, new arrivals, sailors, mano'wars-
men, merchantmen, coasters,

All these I see but nigher and farther the same I
see;

None shall escape me, and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need, yet always have,
I bring not money or amours or dress or eating . . . but
I bring as good;
And send no agent or medium . . . and offer no representative of value—but offer the value itself.

There is something that comes home to one now and perpetually,
It is not what is printed or preached or discussed . . . it eludes discussion and print,
It is not to be put in a book . . . it is not in this book,
It is for you whoever you are . . . it is no farther from you than your hearing and sight are from you,
It is hinted by nearest and commonest and readiest . . . it is not them, though it is endlessly provoked by them . . . What is there ready and near you now?

You may read in many languages and read nothing about it;
You may read the President's message and read nothing about it there,
Nothing in the reports from the state department or treasury department . . . or in the daily papers, or the weekly papers,
Or in the census returns or assessors' returns or prices current or any accounts of stock.

The sun and stars that float in the open air . . . the appleshaped earth and we upon it . . . surely the drift of them is something grand;
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that it is happiness,
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation, or bon-mot or reconnoissance,
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain contingency.

The light and shade—the curious sense of body and identity—the greed that with perfect complaisance devours all things—the endless pride and outstretching of man—unspeakable joys and sorrows,

The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees
and the wonders that fill each minute of time forever
and each acre of surface and space forever,

Have you reckoned them as mainly for a trade or farm-work? or for the profits of a store? or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's leisure or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckoned the landscape took substance and form
that it might be painted in a picture?

Or men and women that they might be written of, and
songs sung?

Or the attraction of gravity and the great laws and harmonious combinations and the fluids of the air as subjects for the savans?

Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy
names?

Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables or
agriculture itself?

Old institutions these arts libraries legends collections—and the practice handed along in manufactures
. . . . will we rate them so high?

Will we rate our prudence and business so high? I
have no objection,

I rate them as high as the highest but a child born
of a woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand and our Constitution grand;
I do not say they are not grand and good—for they are,
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,
But I am eternally in love with you and with all my fellows
upon the earth.

We consider the bibles and religions divine . . . I do not
say they are not divine,
I say they have all grown out of you and may grow out of
you still,
It is not they who give the life . . . it is you who give
the life;
Leaves are not more shed from the trees or trees from the
earth than they are shed out of you.

The sum of all known value and respect I add up in you
whoever you are;
The President is up there in the White House for you
. . . it is not you who are here for him,
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you . . . not you
here for them,
The Congress convenes every December for you,
Laws, courts, the forming of states, the charters of cities,
the going and coming of commerce and mails are all
for you.

All doctrines, all politics and civilization exurge from you,
All sculpture and monuments and anything inscribed any-
where are tallied in you,
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records
reach is in you this hour—and myths and tales the
same;
If you were not breathing and walking here where would
they all be?
The most renowned poems would be ashes . . . orations
and plays would be vacuums.
All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it;
Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines
of the arches and cornices?

All music is what awakens from you when you are reminded
by the instruments,
It is not the violins and the cornets . . . it is not the
oboe nor the beating drums—nor the notes of the bari-
tone singer singing his sweet romanza . . . nor

those of the men's chorus, nor those of the women's
chorus,

It is nearer and farther than they.

Will the whole come back then?

Can each see the signs of the best by a look in the looking-
glass? Is there nothing greater or more?

Does all sit there with you and here with me?

The old forever new things you foolish child!
the closest simplest things—this moment with you,

Your person and every particle that relates to your person,
The pulses of your brain waiting their chance and encour-
agement at every deed or sight;

Anything you do in public by day, and anything you do in
secret between days,

What is called right and what is called wrong what
you behold or touch what causes your anger or
wonder,

The anklechain of the slave, the bed of the bedhouse, the
cards of the gambler, the plates of the forger;

What is seen or learned in the street, or intuitively learned,
What is learned in the public school—spelling, reading,
writing and ciphering the blackboard and the
teacher's diagrams:

The panes of the windows and all that appears through
them the going forth in the morning and the
aimless spending of the day;

(What is it that you made money? what is it that you got
what you wanted?)

The usual routine the workshop, factory, yard, office,
store, or desk;

The jaunt of hunting or fishing, or the life of hunting or
fishing,

Pasturelife, foddering, milking and herding, and all the
personnel and usages;

The plum-orchard and apple-orchard gardening . .
seedlings, cuttings, flowers and vines,

Grains and manures . . marl, clay, loam . . the subsoil

- plough . . the shovel and pick and rake and hoe . .
irrigation and draining;
- The currycomb . . the horse-cloth . . the halter and bridle
and bits . . the very wisps of straw,
- The barn and barn-yard . . the bins and mangers . . the
mows and racks:
- Manufactures . . commerce . . engineering . . the building
of cities, and every trade carried on there . . and the
implements of every trade,
- The anvil and tongs and hammer . . the axe and wedge . .
the square and mitre and jointer and smoothingplane;
- The plumbob and trowel and level . . the wall-scaffold,
and the work of walls and ceilings . . or any mason-
work:
- The ship's compass . . the sailor's tarpaulin . . the stays
and lanyards, and the ground-tackle for anchoring or
mooring,
- The sloop's tiller . . the pilot's wheel and bell . . the yacht
or fish-smack . . the great gay-pennanted three-
hundred-foot steamboat under full headway, with her
proud fat breasts and her delicate swift-flashing
paddles;
- The trail and line and hooks and sinkers . . the seine, and
hauling the seine;
- Smallarms and rifles the powder and shot and caps
and wadding the ordnance for war the
carriages:
- Everyday objects the housechairs, the carpet, the bed
and the counterpane of the bed, and him or her sleep-
ing at night, and the wind blowing, and the indefinite
noises:
- The snowstorm or rainstorm the tow-trowsers
the lodge-hut in the woods, and the still-hunt:
- City and country . . fireplace and candle . . gaslight and
heater and aqueduct;
- The message of the governor, mayor, or chief of police
. . . . the dishes of breakfast or dinner or supper;
- The bunkroom, the fire-engine, the string-team, and the car
or truck behind;
- The paper I write on or you write on . . and every word

we write . . and every cross and twirl of the pen . .
and the curious way we write what we think . . . yet
very faintly;

The directory, the detector, the ledger . . . the books in
ranks or the bookshelves . . . the clock attached to
the wall,

The ring on your finger . . the lady's wristlet . . the ham-
mers of stonebreakers or coppersmiths . . the drug-
gist's vials and jars;

The etui of surgical instruments, and the etui of oculist's or
aurist's instruments, or dentist's instruments;

Glassblowing, grinding of wheat and corn . . casting, and
what is cast . . tinroofing, shingledressing,

Shipcarpentering, flagging of sidewalks by flaggers . . dock-
building, fishcuring, ferrying;

The pump, the piledriver, the great derrick . . the coal-
kiln and brickkiln,

Ironworks or whiteleadworks . . the sugarhouse . . steam-
saws, and the great mills and factories;

The cottonbale . . the stevedore's hook . . the saw and buck
of the sawyer . . the screen of the coalscreener . . the
mould of the moulder . . the workingknife of the
butcher;

The cylinder press . . the handpress . . the frisket and tym-
pan . . the compositor's stick and rule,

The implements for daguerreotyping . . . the tools of the
rigger or grappler or sailmaker or blockmaker,

Goods of guttapercha or papiermache . . . colors and
brushes . . . glaziers' implements,

The veneer and gluepot . . the confectioner's ornaments
. . the decanter and glasses . . the shears and flatiron;

The awl and kneestrap . . the pint measure and quart meas-
ure . . the counter and stool . . the writingpen of quill
or metal;

Billiards and tenpins . . . the ladders and hanging ropes
of the gymnasium, and the manly exercises;

The designs for wallpapers or oilcloths or carpets . . .
the fancies for goods for women . . . the book-
binder's stamps;

- Leatherdressing, coachmaking, boilermaking, ropetwisting,
distilling, signpainting, limeburning, coopering, cottonpicking,
The walkingbeam of the steam-engine . . the throttle and
governors, and the up and down rods,
Stavemachines and planingmachines . . . the cart of the
carman . . the omnibus . . the ponderous dray;
The snowplough and two engines pushing it . . . the ride
in the express train of only one car . . . the swift
go through a howling storm:
The bearhunt or coonhunt . . . the bonfire of shavings
in the open lot in the city . . the crowd of children
watching;
The blows of the fighting-man . . the upper cut and one-
two-three;
The shopwindows . . . the coffins in the sexton's ware-
room . . . the fruit on the fruitstand . . . the beef
on the butcher's stall,
The bread and cakes in the bakery . . . the white and red
pork in the pork-store;
The milliner's ribbons . . the dressmaker's patterns . . .
the tea-table . . the homemade sweetmeats:
The column of wants in the one-cent paper . . the news
by telegraph . . . the amusements and operas and
shows:
The cotton and woolen and linen you wear . . . the
money you make and spend;
Your room and bedroom . . . your piano-forte . . . the
stove and cookpans,
The house you live in . . . the rent . . . the other
tenants . . . the deposite in the savings-bank . . .
the trade at the grocery,
The pay on Saturday night . . . the going home, and the
purchases;
In them the heft of the heaviest . . . in them far more
than you estimated, and far less also,
In them, not yourself . . . you and your soul enclose all
things, regardless of estimation,
In them your themes and hints and provokers . . if not,

the whole earth has no themes or hints or provokers,
and never had.

I do not affirm what you see beyond is futile . . . I do not
advise you to stop,

I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,
But I say that none lead to greater or sadder or happier
than those lead to.

Will you seek afar off? You surely come back at last,
In things best known to you finding the best or as good as
the best,

In folks nearest to you finding also the sweetest and strong-
est and lovingest,

Happiness not in another place, but this place . . not for
another hour, but this hour,

Man is the first you see or touch . . . always in your
friend or brother or nighest neighbor . . . Woman
in your mother or lover or wife,

And all else thus far known giving place to men and
women.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver
that carved the supporting desk,

When the sacred vessels or the bits of the eucharist, or the
lath and plast, procreate as effectually as the young
silversmiths or bakers, or the masons in their overalls,

When a university course convinces like a slumbering
woman and child convince,

When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-
watchman's daughter,

When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my
friendly companions,

I intend to reach them my hand and make as much of them
as I do of men and women.

LEAVES OF GRASS

To think of time to think through the retrospection,
To think of today . . and the ages continued henceforward.

Have you guessed you yourself would not continue? Have
you dreaded those earth-beetles?

Have you feared the future would be nothing to you?

Is today nothing? Is the beginningless past nothing?
If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east that men and
women were flexible and real and alive that
every thing was real and alive;

To think that you and I did not see feel think nor bear our
part,

To think that we are now here and bear our part.

Not a day passes . . not a minute or second without an
accouchement;

Not a day passes . . not a minute or second without a
corpse.

When the dull nights are over, and the dull days also,
When the soreness of lying so much in bed is over,
When the physician, after long putting off, gives the silent
and terrible look for an answer,
When the children come hurried and weeping, and the
brothers and sisters have been sent for,

When medicines stand unused on the shelf, and the
camphor-smell has pervaded the rooms,
When the faithful hand of the living does not desert the
hand of the dying,
When the twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of
the dying,
When the breath ceases and the pulse of the heart ceases,
Then the corpse-limbs stretch on the bed, and the living
look upon them,
They are palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,
But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks
curiously on the corpse.

To think that the rivers will come to flow, and the snow
fall, and fruits ripen . . and act upon others as upon
us now . . . yet not act upon us;
To think of all these wonders of city and country . . and
others taking great interest in them . . and we taking
small interest in them.

To think how eager we are in building our houses,
To think others shall be just as eager . . and we quite in-
different.

I see one building the house that serves him a few years
. . . or seventy or eighty years at most;
I see one building the house that serves him longer than
that.

Slowmoving and black lines creep over the whole earth
. . . they never cease . . . they are the burial lines,
He that was President was buried, and he that is now Presi-
dent shall surely be buried.

Cold dash of waves at the ferrywharf,
Posh and ice in the river . . . half-frozen mud in the
streets,

A gray discouraged sky overhead the short last day-
light of December,

A hearse and stages other vehicles give place,
The funeral of an old stagedriver the cortege mostly
drivers.

Rapid the trot to the cemetery,
Duly rattles the deathbell the gate is passed
the grave is halted at the living alight
the hearse uncloses,

The coffin is lowered and settled the whip is laid on
the coffin,

The earth is swiftly shovelled in a minute . . no one
moves or speaks it is done,

He is decently put away is there anything more?

He was a goodfellow,
Freemouthed, quicktempered, not badlooking, able to take
his own part,

Witty, sensitive to a slight, ready with life or death for a
friend,

Fond of women, . . played some . . eat hearty and drank
hearty,

Had known what it was to be flush . . grew lowspirited
toward the last . . sickened . . was helped by a con-
tribution,

Died aged forty-one years . . and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended or finger uplifted,
Apron, cape, gloves, strap wetweather clothes
whip carefully chosen boss, spotter, starter, and
hostler,

Somebody loafing on you, or you loafing on somebody
. . . . headway man before and man behind,

Good day's work or bad day's work pet stock or mean
stock first out or last out turning in at
night,

To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers
. . and he there takes no interest in them.

The markets, the government, the workingman's wages
. . . . to think what account they are through our
nights and days;

To think that other workingmen will make just as great
account of them . . yet we make little or no account.

The vulgar and the refined what you call sin and
what you call goodness . . to think how wide a differ-
ence;

To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we
lie beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is!

Have you pleasure from looking at the sky? Have you pleas-
ure from poems?

Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business?
or planning a nomination and election? or with your
wife and family?

Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework?
or the beautiful maternal cares?

These also flow onward to others you and I flow on-
ward;

But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm and profits and crops to think how en-
grossed you are;

To think there will still be farms and profits and crops . .
yet for you of what avail?

What will be will be well—for what is is well,

To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be
well.

The sky continues beautiful the pleasure of men
with women shall never be sated . . nor the pleasure
of women with men . . nor the pleasure from poems;

The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the
building of houses—they are not phantasms . . they
have weight and form and location;

The farms and profits and crops . . the markets and wages
and government . . they also are not phantasms;
The difference between sin and goodness is no apparition;
The earth is not an echo man and his life and all
the things of his life are well-considered.

You are not thrown to the winds . . you gather certainly
and safely around yourself,
Yourself! Yourself! Yourself forever and ever!

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother
and father—it is to identify you,
It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should
be decided; ,
Something long preparing and formless is arrived and
formed in you,
You are thenceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gathered the weft
crosses the warp the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified;
The orchestra have tuned their instruments sufficiently
. . . . the baton has given the signal.

The guest that was coming he waited long for rea-
sons he is now housed,
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy he
is one of those that to look upon and be with is enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,
The law of the living cannot be eluded it is eternal,
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be
eluded,
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,
The law of drunkards and informers and mean persons can-
not be eluded.

Slowmoving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,
Northerner goes carried and southerner goes carried

and they on the Atlantic side and they on the Pacific,
and they between, and all through the Mississippi
country and all over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go
the heroes and good-doers are well,
The known leaders and inventors and the rich owners and
pious and distinguished may be well,
But there is more account than that there is strict
account of all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are
not nothing,
The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,
The common people of Europe are not nothing the
American aborigines are not nothing,
A zambo or a foreheadless Crowfoot or a Camanche is not
nothing,
The infected in the immigrant hospital are not nothing
. . . . the murderer or mean person is not nothing,
The perpetual succession of shallow people are not nothing
as they go,
The prostitute is not nothing the mocker of religion
is not nothing as he goes.

I shall go with the rest we have satisfaction:
I have dreamed that we are not to be changed so much
. . . . nor the law of us changed;
I have dreamed that heroes and good-doers shall be under
the present and past law,
And that murderers and drunkards and liars shall be under
the present and past law;
For I have dreamed that the law they are under now is
enough.

And I have dreamed that the satisfaction is not so much
changed and that there is no life without
satisfaction;
What is the earth? what are body and soul without satisfaction?

I shall go with the rest,
We cannot be stopped at a given point . . . that is no
satisfaction;
To show us a good thing or a few good things for a space
of time—that is no satisfaction;
We must have the indestructible breed of the best, regard-
less of time.

If otherwise, all these things came but to ashes of dung;
If maggots and rats ended us, then suspicion and treachery
and death.

Do you suspect death? If I were to suspect death I should
die now,
Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited to-
ward annihilation?

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,
Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,
The whole universe indicates that it is good,
The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals! How perfect
is my soul!
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!
What is called good is perfect, and what is called sin is
just as perfect;
The vegetables and minerals are all perfect . . and the
imponderable fluids are perfect;
Slowly and surely they have passed on to this, and slowly
and surely they will yet pass on.

O my soul! if I realize you I have satisfaction,
Animals and vegetables! if I realize you I have satisfaction,
Laws of the earth and air! if I realize you I have satisfaction.

I cannot define my satisfaction . . yet it is so,
I cannot define my life . . yet it is so.

I swear I see now that every thing has an eternal soul!
The trees have, rooted in the ground . . . the weeds of
the sea have . . . the animals.

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!
That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float
is for it, and the cohering is for it,
And all preparation is for it . . and identity is for it . . and
life and death are for it.

LEAVES OF GRASS

I wander all night in my vision,
Stepping with light feet swiftly and noiselessly stepping and stopping,
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers;
Wandering and confused lost to myself ill-assorted contradictory,
Pausing and gazing and bending and stopping.

How solemn they look there, stretched and still;
How quiet they breathe, the little children in their cradles.

The wretched features of ennuyees, the white features of corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces of onanists,
The gashed bodies on battlefields, the insane in their strong-doored rooms, the sacred idiots,
The newborn emerging from gates and the dying emerging from gates,
The night pervades them and enfolds them.

The married couple sleep calmly in their bed, he with his palm on the hip of the wife, and she with her palm on the hip of the husband,
The sisters sleep lovingly side by side in their bed,
The men sleep lovingly side by side in theirs,
And the mother sleeps with her little child carefully wrapped.

The blind sleep, and the deaf and dumb sleep,
The prisoner sleeps well in the prison the runaway
son sleeps,
The murderer that is to be hung next day how does
he sleep?
And the murdered person how does he sleep?

The female that loves unrequited sleeps,
And the male that loves unrequited sleeps;
The head of the moneymaker that plotted all day sleeps,
And the enraged and treacherous dispositions sleep.

I stand with drooping eyes by the worstsuffering and
restless,
I pass my hands soothingly to and fro a few inches from
them;
The restless sink in their beds they fitfully sleep.

The earth recedes from me into the night,
I saw that it was beautiful and I see that what is not
the earth is beautiful.

I go from bedside to bedside I sleep close with the
other sleepers, each in turn;
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other dreamers,
And I become the other dreamers.

I am a dance Play up there! the fit is whirling me
fast.

I am the everlaughing it is new moon and twilight,
I see the hiding of douceurs I see nimble ghosts
whichever way I look,
Cache and cache again deep in the ground and sea, and
where it is neither ground or sea.

Well do they do their jobs, those journeymen divine,
Only from me can they hide nothing and would not if they
could;
I reckon I am their boss, and they make me a pet besides,

And surround me, and lead me and run ahead when I walk,
And lift their cunning covers and signify me with stretched
arms, and resume the way;

Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards with mirth-
shouting music and wildflapping pennants of joy.

I am the actor and the actress the voter . . the
politician,

The emigrant and the exile . . the criminal that stood in
the box,

He who has been famous, and he who shall be famous
after today,

The stammerer the wellformed person . . the wasted
or feeble person.

I am she who adorned herself and folded her hair ex-
pectantly,

My truant lover has come and it is dark.

Double yourself and receive me darkness,

Receive me and my lover too he will not let me go
without him.

I roll myself upon you as upon a bed I resign myself
to the dusk.

He whom I call answers me and takes the place of my lover,
He rises with me silently from the bed.

Darkness you are gentler than my lover his flesh was
sweaty and panting,

I feel the hot moisture yet that he left me.

My hands are spread forth . . I pass them in all directions,
I would sound up the shadowy shore to which you are
journeying.

Be careful, darkness already, what was it touched
me?

I thought my lover had gone else darkness and he
are one,

I hear the heart-beat I follow . . I fade away.

O hotcheeked and blushing! O foolish hectic!

O for pity's sake, no one must see me now! my
clothes were stolen while I was abed,

Now I am thrust forth, where shall I run?

Pier that I saw dimly last night when I looked from the
windows,

Pier out from the main, let me catch myself with you and
stay I will not chafe you;

I feel ashamed to go naked about the world,

And am curious to know where my feet stand and
what is this flooding me, childhood or manhood
. . . . and the hunger that crosses the bridge between.

The cloth laps a first sweet eating and drinking,

Laps life-swelling yolks laps ear of rose-corn, milky
and just ripened:

The white teeth stay, and the boss-tooth advances in dark-
ness,

And liquor is spilled on lips and bosoms by touching
glasses, and the best liquor afterward.

I descend my western course my sinews are flaccid,
Perfume and youth course through me, and I am their
wake.

It is my face yellow and wrinkled instead of the old
woman's,

I sit low in a strawbottom chair and carefully darn my
grandson's stockings.

It is I too the sleepless widow looking out on the
winter midnight,

I see the sparkles of starshine on the icy and pallid earth.

A shroud I see—and I am the shroud I wrap a body
and lie in the coffin;

It is dark here underground it is not evil or pain
here it is blank here, for reasons.

It seems to me that everything in the light and air ought
to be happy;

Whoever is not in his coffin and the dark grave, let him
know he has enough.

I see a beautiful gigantic swimmer swimming naked
through the eddies of the sea,

His brown hair lies close and even to his head he
strikes out with courageous arms he urges him-
self with his legs.

I see his white body I see his undaunted eyes;
I hate the swift-running eddies that would dash him head-
foremost on the rocks.

What are you doing you ruffianly red-trickled waves?
Will you kill the courageous giant? Will you kill him in
the prime of his middle age?

Steady and long he struggles;
He is baffled and banged and bruised he holds out
while his strength holds out,

The slapping eddies are spotted with his blood they
bear him away they roll him and swing him and
turn him:

His beautiful body is borne in the circling eddies
it is continually bruised on rocks,

Swiftly and out of sight is borne the brave corpse.

I turn but do not extricate myself;
Confused a pastreading another, but with
darkness yet.

The beach is cut by the razory ice-wind the wreck-
guns sound,

The tempest lulls and the moon comes floundering through
the drifts.

I look where the ship helplessly heads end on I
hear the burst as she strikes . . I hear the howls of
dismay they grow fainter and fainter.

I cannot aid with my wringing fingers;
I can but rush to the surf and let it drench me and freeze
upon me.

I search with the crowd not one of the company is
washed to us alive;
In the morning I help pick up the dead and lay them in
rows in a barn.

Now of the old war-days . . the defeat at Brooklyn;
Washington stands inside the lines . . he stands on the
entrenched hills amid a crowd of officers,
His face is cold and damp he cannot repress the
weeping drops he lifts the glass perpetually to
his eyes the color is blanched from his cheeks,
He sees the slaughter of the southern braves confided to
him by their parents.

The same at last and at last when peace is declared,
He stands in the room of the old tavern the well-
beloved soldiers all pass through.

The officers speechless and slow draw near in their turns,
The chief encircles their necks with his arm and kisses
them on the cheek,
He kisses lightly the wet cheeks one after another
he shakes hands and bids goodbye to the army.

Now I tell what my mother told me today as we sat at
dinner together,
Of when she was a nearly grown girl living home with her
parents on the old homestead.

A red squaw came one breakfasttime to the old homestead,
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rushbot-
toming chairs;
Her hair straight shiny coarse black and profuse halfenvel-
oped her face,
Her step was free and elastic . . . her voice sounded ex-
quisitely as she spoke.

My mother looked in delight and amazement at the
stranger,
She looked at the beauty of her tallborne face and full and
pliant limbs,
The more she looked upon her she loved her,
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and
purity;
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace
. . . she cooked food for her,
She had no work to give her but she gave her remembrance
and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the mid-
dle of the afternoon she went away;
O my mother was loth to have her go away,
All the week she thought of her . . . she watched for
her many a month,
She remembered her many a winter and many a summer,
But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

Now Lucifer was not dead . . . or if he was I am his
sorrowful terrible heir;
I have been wronged . . . I am oppressed . . . I hate
him that oppresses me,
I will either destroy him, or he shall release me.

Damn him! how he does defile me,
How he informs against my brother and sister and takes
pay for their blood,
How he laughs when I look down the bend after the steam-
boat that carries away my woman.

Now the vast dusk bulk that is the whale's bulk it
seems mine,
Warily, sportsman! though I lie so sleepy and sluggish, my
tap is death.

A show of the summer softness a contact of some-
thing unseen an amour of the light and air;
I am jealous and overwhelmed with friendliness,
And will go gallivant with the light and the air myself,
And have an unseen something to be in contact with them
also.

O love and summer! you are in the dreams and in me,
Autumn and winter are in the dreams the farmer
goes with his thrift,
The droves and crops increase the barns are well-
filled.

Elements merge in the night ships make tacks in
the dreams the sailor sails the exile re-
turns home,
The fugitive returns unharmed the immigrant is
back beyond months and years;
The poor Irishman lives in the simple house of his child-
hood, with the wellknown neighbors and faces,
They warmly welcome him he is barefoot again
. . . . he forgets he is welloff;
The Dutchman voyages home, and the Scotchman and
Welchman voyage home . . and the native of the Med-
iterranean voyages home;
To every port of England and France and Spain enter
wellfilled ships;
The Swiss foots it toward his hills the Prussian goes
his way, and the Hungarian his way, and the Pole goes
his way,
The Swede returns, and the Dane and Norwegian return.

The homeward bound and the outward bound,
The beautiful lost swimmer, the ennuyee, the onanist, the
female that loves unrequited, the moneymaker,

The actor and actress . . those through with their parts
and those waiting to commence,
The affectionate boy, the husband and wife, the voter, the
nominee that is chosen and the nominee that has
failed,
The great already known, and the great anytime after to
day,
The stammerer, the sick, the perfectformed, the homely,
The criminal that stood in the box, the judge that sat
and sentenced him, the fluent lawyers, the jury, the
audience,
The laughter and weeper, the dancer, the midnight widow,
the red squaw,
The consumptive, the erysipalite, the idiot, he that is
wronged,
The antipodes, and every one between this and them in
the dark,
I swear they are averaged now one is no better than
the other,
The night and sleep have likened them and restored them.

I swear they are all beautiful,
Every one that sleeps is beautiful every thing in the
dim night is beautiful,
The wildest and bloodiest is over and all is peace.

Peace is always beautiful,
The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.

The myth of heaven indicates the soul;
The soul is always beautiful it appears more or it
appears less it comes or lags behind,
It comes from its embowered garden and looks peasanly
on itself and encloses the world;
Perfect and clean the genitals previously jetting, and per-
fect and clean the womb cohering,
The head wellgrown and proportioned and plumb, and the
bowels and joints proportioned and plumb.

The soul is always beautiful,
The universe is duly in order . . . every thing is in its
place,
What is arrived is in its place, and what waits is in its
place;
The twisted skull waits . . . the watery or rotten blood
waits,
The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and the
child of the drunkard waits long, and the drunkard
himself waits long,
The sleepers that lived and died wait . . . the far ad-
vanced are to go on in their turns, and the far behind
are to go on in their turns,
The diverse shall be no less diverse, but they shall flow
and unite . . . they unite now.

The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed,
They flow hand in hand over the whole earth from east
to west as they lie unclothed;
The Asiatic and African are hand in hand . . . the
European and American are hand in hand,
Learned and unlearned are hand in hand . . and male and
female are hand in hand;
The bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her
lover . . . they press close without lust . . . his
lips press her neck,
The father holds his grown or ungrown son in his arms
with measureless love . . . and the son holds the
father in his arms with measureless love,
The white hair of the mother shines on the white wrist
of the daughter,
The breath of the boy goes with the breath of the man
. . . friend is inarmed by friend,
The scholar kisses the teacher and the teacher kisses the
scholar . . . the wronged is made right,
The call of the slave is one with the master's call . . and
the master salutes the slave,
The felon steps forth from the prison . . . the insane
becomes sane . . . the suffering of sick persons is
relieved,

The sweatings and fevers stop . . the throat that was unsound is sound . . the lungs of the consumptive are resumed . . the poor distressed head is free,
The joints of the rheumatic move as smoothly as ever, and smoother than ever,
Stiflings and passages open the paralysed become supple,
The swelled and convulsed and congested awake to themselves in condition,
They pass the invigoration of the night and the chemistry of the night and awake.

I too pass from the night;
I stay awhile away O night, but I return to you again and love you;
Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?
I am not afraid I have been well brought forward by you;
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in whom I lay so long:
I know not how I came of you, and I know not where I go with you but I know I came well and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night and rise betimes.

I will duly pass the day O my mother and duly return to you;
Not you will yield forth the dawn again more surely than you will yield forth me again,
Not the womb yields the babe in its time more surely than I shall be yielded from you in my time.



LEAVES OF GRASS

The bodies of men and women engirth me, and I engirth
them,

They will not let me off nor I them till I go with them
and respond to them and love them.

Was it dreamed whether those who corrupted their own
live bodies could conceal themselves?

And whether those who defiled the living were as bad as
they who defiled the dead?

The expression of the body of man or woman balks account,
The male is perfect and that of the female is perfect.

The expression of a wellmade man appears not only in his
face,

It is in his limbs and joints also . . . it is curiously in
the joints of his hips and wrists,

It is in his walk . . the carriage of his neck . . the flex
of his waist and knees . . . dress does not hide him,

The strong sweet supple quality he has strikes through the
cotton and flannel;

To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem . .
perhaps more,

You linger to see his back and the back of his neck and
shoulderside.

The sprawl and fulness of babes . . . the bosoms and
heads of women . . . the folds of their dress . . .
their style as we pass in the street . . . the contour
of their shape downwards;

The swimmer naked in the swimmingbath . . seen as he
swims through the salt transparent greenshine, or lies
on his back and rolls silently with the heave of the
water;
Framers bare-armed framing a house . . hoisting the beams
in their places . . or using the mallet and mortising-
chisel,
The bending forward and backward of rowers in rowboats
. . . . the horseman in his saddle;
Girls and mothers and housekeepers in all their exquisite
offices,
The group of laborers seated at noontime with their open
dinnerkettles, and their wives waiting,
The female soothing a child the farmer's daughter
in the garden or cowyard,
The woodman rapidly swinging his axe in the woods
the young fellow hoeing corn the sleighdriver
guiding his six horses through the crowd,
The wrestle of wrestlers . . two apprentice-boys, quite
grown, lusty, goodnatured, nativeborn, out on the
vacant lot at sundown after work,
The coats vests and caps thrown down . . the embrace of
love and resistance,
The upperhold and underhold—the hair rumped over and
blinding the eyes;
The march of firemen in their own costumes—the play of
the masculine muscle through cleansetting trowsers
and waistbands,
The slow return from the fire the pause when the
bell strikes suddenly again—the listening on the alert,
The natural perfect and varied attitudes the bent
head, the curved neck, the counting:
Suchlike I love I loosen myself and pass freely
and am at the mother's breast with the little child,
And swim with the swimmer, and wrestle with wrestlers,
and march in line with the firemen, and pause and
listen and count.

I knew a man he was a common farmer he

was the father of five sons . . . and in them were the fathers of sons . . . and in them were the fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor and calmness and beauty of person;

The shape of his head, the richness and breadth of his manners, the pale yellow and white of his hair and beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes,

These I used to go and visit him to see He was wise also,

He was six feet tall he was over eighty years old his sons were massive clean bearded tanfaced and handsome,

They and his daughters loved him . . . all who saw him loved him . . . they did not love him by allowance . . . they loved him with personal love;

He drank water only the blood showed like scarlet through the clear brown skin of his face;

He was a frequent gunner and fisher . . . he sailed his boat himself . . . he had a fine one presented to him by a shipjoiner he had fowling-pieces, presented to him by men that loved him;

When he went with his five sons and many grandsons to hunt or fish you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous of the gang,

You would wish long and long to be with him you would wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other.

I have perceived that to be with those I like is enough,
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,
To be surrounded by beautiful curious breathing laughing flesh is enough,

To pass among them . . to touch any one to rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment what is this then?

I do not ask any more delight I swim in it as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women
and looking on them and in the contact and odor of
them that pleases the soul well,
All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

This is the female form,
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a
helpless vapor . . . all falls aside but myself and it,
Books, art, religion, time . . the visible and solid earth . .
the atmosphere and the fringed clouds . . what was
expected of heaven or feared of hell are now con-
sumed,
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it . . the
response likewise ungovernable,
Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands—
all diffused . . . mine too diffused,
Ebb stung by the flow, and flow stung by the ebb . . .
loveflesh swelling and deliciously aching,
Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous . . .
quivering jelly of love . . . whiteblow and delirious
juice,
Bridegroom-night of love working surely and softly into the
prostrate dawn,
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweetfleshed day.
This is the nucleus . . . after the child is born of woman
the man is born of woman,
This is the bath of birth . . . this is the merge of small
and large and the outlet again.

Be not ashamed women . . your privilege encloses the rest
. . it is the exit of the rest,
You are the gates of the body and you are the gates of the
soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them . . .
she is in her place . . . she moves with perfect
balance,

She is all things duly veiled she is both passive and active she is to conceive daughters as well as sons and sons as well as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in nature as I see through a mist one with inexpressible completeness and beauty see the bent head and arms folded over the breast the female I see,

I see the bearer of the great fruit which is immortality the good thereof is not tasted by rouses, and never can be.

The male is not less the soul, nor more he too is in his place,

He too is all qualities he is action and power the flush of the known universe is in him,

Scorn becomes him well and appetite and defiance become him well,

The fiercest largest passions . . bliss that is utmost and sorrow that is utmost become him well pride is for him,

The fullspread pride of man is calming and excellent to the soul;

Knowledge becomes him he likes it always he brings everything to the test of himself,

Whatever the survey . . whatever the sea and the sail, he strikes soundings at last only here,

Where else does he strike soundings except here?

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred it is no matter who,

Is it a slave? Is it one of the dullfaced immigrants just landed on the wharf?

Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the welloff just as much as you,

Each has his or her place in the procession.

All is a procession,

The universe is a procession with measured and beautiful motion.

Do you know so much that you call the slave or the dull-faced ignorant?

Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight . . . and he or she has no right to a sight?

Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffused float, and the soil is on the surface and water runs and vegetation sprouts for you . . and not for him and her?

A slave at auction!

I help the auctioneer the sloven does not half know his business.

Gentlemen look on this curious creature,
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough for him,

For him the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without one animal or plant,

For him the revolving cycles truly and steadily rolled.

In that head the allbaffling brain,
In it and below it the making of the attributes of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red black or white they are very cunning in tendon and nerve;
They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, lifelike eyes, pluck, volition,
Flakes of breastmuscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby, goodsized arms and legs,
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs his blood the same old blood . . the same red running blood;

There swells and jets his heart There all passions and desires . . all reachings and aspirations:

Do you think they are not there because they are not expressed in parlors and lecture-rooms?

This is not only one man he is the father of those
who shall be fathers in their turns,
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodi-
ments and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of
his offspring through the centuries?
Who might you find you have come from yourself if you
could trace back through the centuries?

A woman at auction,
She too is not only herself she is the teeming mother
of mothers,
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates
to the mothers.

Her daughters or their daughters' daughters . . who knows
who shall mate with them?
Who knows through the centuries what heroes may come
from them?

In them and of them natal love in them the divine
mystery the same old beautiful mystery.

Have you ever loved a woman?

Your mother is she living? Have you been
much with her? and has she been much with you?
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in
all nations and times all over the earth?

If life and the soul are sacred the human body is sacred;
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood
untainted,
And in man or woman a clean strong firmfibred body is
beautiful as the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body?
or the fool that corrupted her own live body?

For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves.

Who degrades or defiles the living human body is cursed,
Who degrades or defiles the body of the dead is not more
cursed.

LEAVES OF GRASS

Sauntering the pavement or riding the country byroad here
then are faces,

Faces of friendship, precision, caution, suavity, ideality,
The spiritual prescient face, the always welcome common
benevolent face,

The face of the singing of music, the grand faces of natural
lawyers and judges broad at the backtop,

The faces of hunters and fishers, bulged at the brows
. . . . the shaved blanched faces of orthodox citizens,

The pure extravagant yearning questioning artist's face,

The welcome ugly face of some beautiful soul the
handsome detested or despised face,

The sacred faces of infants the illuminated face of
the mother of many children,

The face of an amour the face of veneration,

The face as of a dream the face of an immobile rock,

The face withdrawn of its good and bad . . a castrated
face,

A wild hawk . . his wings clipped by the clipper,

A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife of
the gelder.

Sauntering the pavement or crossing the ceaseless ferry,
here then are faces;

I see them and complain not and am content with all.

Do you suppose I could be content with all if I thought
them their own finale?

This now is too lamentable a face for a man;
Some abject louse asking leave to be . . cringing for it,
Some milknosed maggot blessing what lets it wrig to its
hole.

This face is a dog's snout sniffing for garbage;
Snakes nest in that mouth . . I hear the sibilant threat.

This face is a haze more chill than the arctic sea,
Its sleepy and wobbling icebergs crunch as they go.

This is a face of bitter herbs this an emetic
they need no label,
And more of the drugshelf . . laudanum, caoutchouc, or
hog's lard.

This face is an epilepsy advertising and doing business
. . . . its wordless tongue gives out the unearthly cry,
Its veins down the neck distend its eyes roll till they
show nothing but their whites,
Its teeth grit . . the palms of the hands are cut by the
turned-in nails,
The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground while
he speculates well.

This face is bitten by vermin and worms,
And this is some murderer's knife with a halfpulled
scabbard.

This face owes to the sexton his dismalest fee,
An unceasing deathbell tolls there.

Those are really men! the bosses and tufts of the
great round globel

Features of my equals, would you trick me with your
creased and cadaverous march?
Well then you cannot trick me.

I see your rounded never-erased flow,
I see neath the rims of your haggard and mean disguises.

Splay and twist as you like poke with the tangling
fores of fishes or rats,
You'll be unmuzzled you certainly will.

I saw the face of the most smeared and slobbering idiot
they had at the asylum,
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not;
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,
The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen tene-
ment;
And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,
And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and unharmed,
every inch as good as myself.

The Lord advances and yet advances:
Always the shadow in front always the reached hand
bringing up the laggards.

Out of this face emerge banners and horses O
superb! I see what is coming,
I see the high pioneercaps I see the staves of runners
clearing the way,
I hear victorious drums.

This face is a lifeboat;
This is the face commanding and bearded it asks
no odds of the rest;
This face is flavored fruit ready for eating;
This face of a healthy honest boy is the programme of all
good.

These faces bear testimony slumbering or awake,
They show their descent from the Master himself.

Off the word I have spoken I except not one red
white or black, all are deific,
In each house is the ovum it comes forth after a
thousand years.

Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me,
Tall and sufficient stand behind and make signs to me;
I read the promise and patiently wait.

This is a fullgrown lily's face,
She speaks to the limber-hip'd man near the garden pickets,
Come here, she blushing cries . . . Come nigh to me
 limber-hip'd man and give me your finger and thumb,
Stand at my side till I lean as high as I can upon you,
Fill me with albescent honey . . . bend down to me,
Rub to me with your chafing beard . . rub to my breast
 and shoulders.

The old face of the mother of many children:
Whist! I am fully content.

Lulled and late in the smoke of the Sabbath morning,
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,
It hangs thin by the sassafras, the wildcherry and the catbrier
 under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the soiree,
I heard what the run of poets were saying so long,
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from the white froth
 and the water-blue.

Behold a woman!
She looks out from her quaker cap . . . her face is clearer
 and more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded porch of the farm-
 house,
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of creamhued linen,
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her granddaughters spun
 it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth!
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does
not wish to go!
The justified mother of men!

A young man came to me with a message from his brother,
How should the young man know the whether and when
of his brother?
Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stood before the young man face to face, and took
his right hand in my left hand and his left hand in
my right hand,
And I answered for his brother and for men . . . and I
answered for the poet, and sent these signs.

Him all wait for . . . him all yield up to . . . his word
is decisive and final,
Him they accept . . . in him lave . . . in him perceive
themselves as amid light,
Him they immerse, and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the land-
scape, people and animals,
The profound earth and its attributes, and the unquiet
ocean,
All enjoyments and properties, and money, and whatever
money will buy,
The best farms. . . others toiling and planting, and
he unavoidably reaps,
The noblest and costliest cities . . . others grading and
building, and he domiciles there;
Nothing for any one but what is for him . . . near and
far are for him,
The ships in the offing . . . the perpetual shows and
marches on land are for him if they are for any body.

He puts things in their attitudes,
He puts today out of himself with plasticity and love,
He places his own city, times, reminiscences, parents,
brothers and sisters, associations employment and
politics, so that the rest never shame them afterward,
nor assume to command them.

He is the answerer,
What can be answered he answers, and what cannot be
answered he shows how it cannot be answered.

A man is a summons and challenge,
It is vain to skulk Do you hear that mocking and
laughter? Do you hear the ironical echoes?

Books friendships philosophers priests action pleasure pride
beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction;
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat
up and down also.

Whichever the sex . . . whatever the season or place he
may go freshly and gently and safely by day or by
night,
He has the passkey of hearts to him the response
of the prying of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal the flow of beauty is not
more welcome or universal than he is,
The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is
blessed.

Every existence has its idiom every thing has an
idiom and tongue;
He resolves all tongues into his own, and bestows it upon
men . . and any man translates . . and any man trans-
lates himself also:
One part does not counteract another part He is
the joiner . . he sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike, How are you friend? to the
President at his levee,
And he says Good day my brother, to Cudge that hoes in
the sugarfield;
And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,
He walks among the Congress and one representative
says to another, Here is our equal appearing and new.

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to be a captain and
the sailors that he has followed the sea,
And the authors take him for an author and the
artists for an artist,
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and
love them;
No matter what the work is, that he is one to follow it
or has followed it,
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers
and sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jew he seems a Russ to the Russ
. . . . usual and near . . removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffeehouse claims
him,
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, and the German is sure,
and the Spaniard is sure and the island Cuban
is sure.

The engineer, the deckhand on the great lakes or on the
Mississippi or St Lawrence or Sacramento or Hudson
or Delaware claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect
blood,
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the begger,
sea themselves in the ways of him he strangely
transmutes them,

They are not vile any more . . . they hardly know themselves, they are so grown.

You think it would be good to be the writer of melodious verses,

Well it would be good to be the writer of melodious verses;
But what are verses beyond the flowing character you could have? . . . or beyond beautiful manners and behaviour?

Or beyond one manly or affectionate deed of an apprentice-boy? . . or old woman? . . or man that has been in prison or is likely to be in prison?

Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,
Like lightning Europe le'pt forth . . . half startled at itself,

Its feet upon the ashes and the rags . . . Its hands tight to the throats of kings.

O hope and faith! O aching close of lives! O many a sickened heart!

Turn back unto this day, and make yourselves afresh.

And you, paid to defile the People . . . you liars mark:
Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,
For court thieving in its manifold mean forms,
Worming from his simplicity the poor man's wages;
For many a promise sworn by royal lips, And broken, and laughed at in the breaking,

Then in their power not for all these did the blows strike of personal revenge . . or the heads of the noble fall;
The People scorn the ferocity of kings.

But the sweetness of mercy brewed bitter destruction, and the frightened rulers come back:

Each comes in state with his train . . . hangman, priest and tax-gatherer . . . soldier, lawyer, jailer and sycophant.

Yet behind all, lo, a Shape,
Vague as the night, draped interminably, head front and
form in scarlet folds,
Whose face and eyes none may see,
Out of its robes only this the red robes, lifted by
the arm,
One finger pointed high over the top, like the head of a
snake appears.

Meanwhile corpses lie in new-made graves bloody
corpses of young men:
The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily the bullets of
princes are flying the creatures of power laugh
aloud,
And all these things bear fruits and they are good.

Those corpses of young men,
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets . . . those hearts
pierced by the gray lead,
Cold and motionless as they seem . . live elsewhere with
unslaughter'd vitality.

They live in other young men, O kings,
They live in brothers, again ready to defy you:
They were purified by death They were taught and
exalted.

Not a grave of the murdered for freedom but grows seed
for freedom in its turn to bear seed,
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and
the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let
loose,
But it stalks invisibly over the earth . . whispering counsel-
ing cautioning.

Liberty let others despair of you I never despair of
you.

Is the house shut? Is the master away?
Nevertheless be ready be not weary of watching,
He will soon return his messengers come anon.

Clear the way there Jonathan!
Way for the President's marshal! Way for the government
cannon!
Way for the federal foot and dragoons and the
phantoms afterward.

I rose this morning early to get betimes in Boston town;
Here's a good place at the corner I must stand and
see the show.

I love to look on the stars and stripes I hope the
fifes will play Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the foremost with cutlasses,
Every man holds his revolver marching stiff through
Boston town.

A fog follows antiques of the same come limping,
Some appear wooden-legged and some appear bandaged
and bloodless.

Why this is a show! It has called the dead out of the earth,
The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see;
Uncountable phantoms gather by flank and rear of it,
Cocked hats of mothly mould and crutches made of mist,
Arms in slings and old men leaning on young men's
shoulders.

What troubles you, Yankee phantoms? What is all this
chattering of bare gums?
Does the ague convulse your limbs? Do you mistake your
crutches for firelocks, and level them?

If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see the
President's marshal,
If you groan such groans you might balk the government
cannon.

For shame old maniacs! Bring down those tossed
arms, and let your white hair be;
Here gape your smart grandsons their wives gaze at
them from the windows,
See how well-dressed see how orderly they conduct
themselves.

Worse and worse Can't you stand it? Are you re-
treating?
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then! Pell-mell! Back to the hills, old
limpers!
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here Shall I tell
you what it is, gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor he shall send a com-
mittee to England,
They shall get a grant from the Parliament, and go with
a cart to the royal vault.

Dig out King George's coffin unwrap him quick from
the graveclothes box up his bones for a journey:
Find a swift Yankee clipper here is freight for you
blackbellied clipper,
Up with your anchor! shake out your sails! steer
straight toward Boston bay.

Now call the President's marshal again, and bring out the
government cannon,
And fetch home the roarers from Congress, and make
another procession and guard it with foot and
dragoons.

Here is a centrepiece for them:

Look! all orderly citizens look from the windows
women.

The committee open the box and set up the regal ribs
and glue those that will not stay,
And clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown
on top of the skull.

You have got your revenge old buster! The crown
is come to its own and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets Jonathan you are
a made man from this day,
You are mighty cute and here is one of your bargains.

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon and received with
wonder or pity or love or dread, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain
part of the day or for many years or stretching
cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass, and white and red morningglories, and white and
red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the March-born lambs, and the sow's pink-faint litter,
and the mare's foal, and the cow's calf, and the noisy
brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pondside
. . and the fish suspending themselves so curiously be-
low there . . and the beautiful curious liquid . . and
the water-plants with their graceful flat heads . . all
became part of him.

And the field-sprouts of April and May became part of
him wintergrain sprouts, and those of the light-
yellow corn, and of the esculent roots of the garden,

And the appletrees covered with blossoms, and the fruit
afterward . . . and woodberries . . and the common-
est weeds by the road;

And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse
of the tavern whence he had lately risen,

And the schoolmistress that passed on her way to the school
. . and the friendly boys that passed . . and the
quarrelsome boys . . and the tidy and freshcheeked
girls . . and the barefoot negro boy and girl,

And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents . . he that had propelled the fatherstuff
at night, and fathered him . . and she that conceived
him in her womb and birthed him . . . they gave
this child more of themselves than that,

They gave him afterward every day . . . they and of them
became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the sup-
per-table,

The mother with mild words . . . clean her cap and gown
. . . a wholesome odor falling off her person and
clothes as she walks by:

The father, strong, selfsufficient, manly, mean, angered, un-
just,

The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty
lure,

The family usages, the language, the company, the furni-
ture . . . the yearning and swelling heart,

Affection that will not be gainsayed . . . The sense of
what is real . . . the thought if after all it should
prove unreal,

The doubts of daytime and the doubts of nighttime . . .
the curious whether and how,

Whether that which appears so is so . . . Or is it all
flashes and specks?

Men and women crowding fast in the streets . . if they
are not flashes and specks what are they?

The streets themselves, and the facades of houses . . .
the goods in the windows,

Vehicles . . teams . . the tiered wharves, and the huge
crossing at the ferries;
The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset
the river between,
Shadows . . aureola and mist . . light falling on roofs
and gables of white or brown, three miles off,
The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide . .
the little boat slacktowed astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves and quickbroken crests and
slapping;
The strata of colored clouds the long bar of maroon-
tint away solitary by itself the spread of purity
it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying seacrow, the fragrance of
saltmarsh and shoremud;
These became part of that child who went forth every day,
and who now goes and will always go forth every day,
And these become of him or her that peruses them now.

Who learns my lesson complete?

Boss and journeyman and apprentice? churchman
and atheist?

The stupid and the wise thinker parents and off-
spring merchant and clerk and porter and
customer editor, author, artist and schoolboy?

Draw nigh and commence,

It is no lesson it lets down the bars to a good
lesson,

And that to another and every one to another still.

The great laws take and effuse without argument,

I am of the same style, for I am their friend,

I love them quits and quits I do not halt and make
salaams.

I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and the
reasons of things,

They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear I cannot say
it to myself it is very wonderful.

It is no little matter, this round and delicious globe, moving
so exactly in its orbit forever and ever, without one
jolt or the untruth of a single second;

I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand
years, nor ten decillions of years,
Nor planned and built one thing after another, as an
architect plans and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman,
Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or
woman,

Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me or any
one else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is
immortal,

I know it is wonderful but my eyesight is equally
wonderful and how I was conceived in my
mother's womb is equally wonderful,

And how I was not palpable once but am now and
was born on the last day of May 1819 and
passed from a babe in the creeping trance of three
summers and three winters to articulate and walk
. . . . are all equally wonderful.

And that I grew six feet high and that I have become
a man thirty-six years old in 1855 and that I
am here anyhow—are all equally wonderful;

And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect
each other without ever seeing each other, and never
perhaps to see each other, is every bit as wonderful:

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as
wonderful,

And that I can remind you, and you think them and know
them to be true is just as wonderful,

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with
the earth is equally wonderful,

And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars
is equally wonderful.

Come I should like to hear you tell me what there is in
yourself that is not just as wonderful,
And I should like to hear the name of anything between
Sunday morning and Saturday night that is not just
as wonderful.

Great are the myths I too delight in them,
Great are Adam and Eve I too look back and accept
them;
Great the risen and fallen nations, and their poets, women,
sages, inventors, rulers, warriors and priests.

Great is liberty! Great is equality! I am their follower,
Helmsmen of nations, choose your craft where you
sail I sail,
Yours is the muscle of life or death yours is the
perfect science in you I have absolute faith.

Great is today, and beautiful,
It is good to live in this age there never was any
better.

Great are the plunges and throes and triumphs and falls
of democracy,
Great the reformers with their lapses and screams,
Great the daring and venture of sailors on new explorations.

Great are yourself and myself,
We are just as good and bad as the oldest and youngest
or any,
What the best and worst did we could do,
What they felt . . do not we feel it in ourselves?
What they wished . . do we not wish the same?

Great is youth, and equally great is old age great
are the day and night;

Great is wealth and great is poverty great is expres-
sion and great is silence. |

Youth large lusty and loving youth full of grace and
force and fascination,

Do you know that old age may come after you with equal
grace and force and fascination?

Day fullblown and splendid day of the immense sun,
and action and ambition and laughter,

The night follows close, with millions of suns, and sleep
and restoring darkness.

Wealth with the flush hand and fine clothes and hospi-
tality:

But then the soul's wealth—which is candor and knowledge
and pride and enfolding love:

Who goes for men and women showing poverty richer than
wealth?

Expression of speech . . in what is written or said forget
not that silence is also expressive,

That anguish as hot as the hottest and contempt as cold
as the coldest may be without words,

That the true adoration is likewise without words and with-
out kneeling.

Great is the greatest nation . . the nation of clusters of
equal nations.

Great is the earth, and the way it became what it is,
Do you imagine it is stopped at this? and the in-
crease abandoned?

Understand then that it goes as far onward from this as
this is from the times when it lay in covering waters
and gases.

Great is the quality of truth in man,
The quality of truth in man supports itself through all
changes,
It is inevitably in the man He and it are in love, and
never leave each other.

The truth in man is no dictum it is vital as eyesight,
If there be any soul there is truth if there be man
or woman there is truth If there be physical
or moral there is truth,
If there be equilibrium or volition there is truth if
there be things at all upon the earth there is truth.

O truth of the earth! O truth of things! I am determined
to press the whole way toward you,
Sound your voice! I scale mountains or dive in the sea
after you.

Great is language it is the mightiest of the sciences,
It is the fulness and color and form and diversity of the
earth and of men and women and of all
qualities and processes;
It is greater than wealth it is greater than buildings
or ships or religions or paintings or music.

Great is the English speech What speech is so great
as the English?
Great is the English brood What brood has so vast
a destiny as the English?
It is the mother of the brood that must rule the earth with
the new rule,
The new rule shall rule as the soul rules, and as the love
and justice and equality that are in the soul rule.

Great is the law Great are the old few landmarks
of the law they are the same in all times and
shall not be disturbed.

Great are marriage, commerce, newspapers, books, free-
trade, railroads, steamers, international mails and tele-
graphs and exchanges.

Great is Justice;

Justice is not settled by legislators and laws it is in
the soul,

It cannot be varied by statutes any more than love or pride
or the attraction of gravity can,

It is immutable . . it does not depend on majorities
majorities or what not come at last before the same
passionless and exact tribunal.

For justice are the grand natural lawyers and perfect judges
. . . . it is in their souls,

It is well assorted they have not studied for nothing
. . . . the great includes the less,

They rule on the highest grounds they oversee all
eras and states and administrations,

The perfect judge fears nothing he could go front
to front before God,

Before the perfect judge all shall stand back life
and death shall stand back heaven and hell shall
stand back.

Great is goodness;

I do not know what it is any more than I know what health
is but I know it is great.

Great is wickedness I find I often admire it just as
much as I admire goodness:

Do you call that a paradox? It certainly is a paradox.

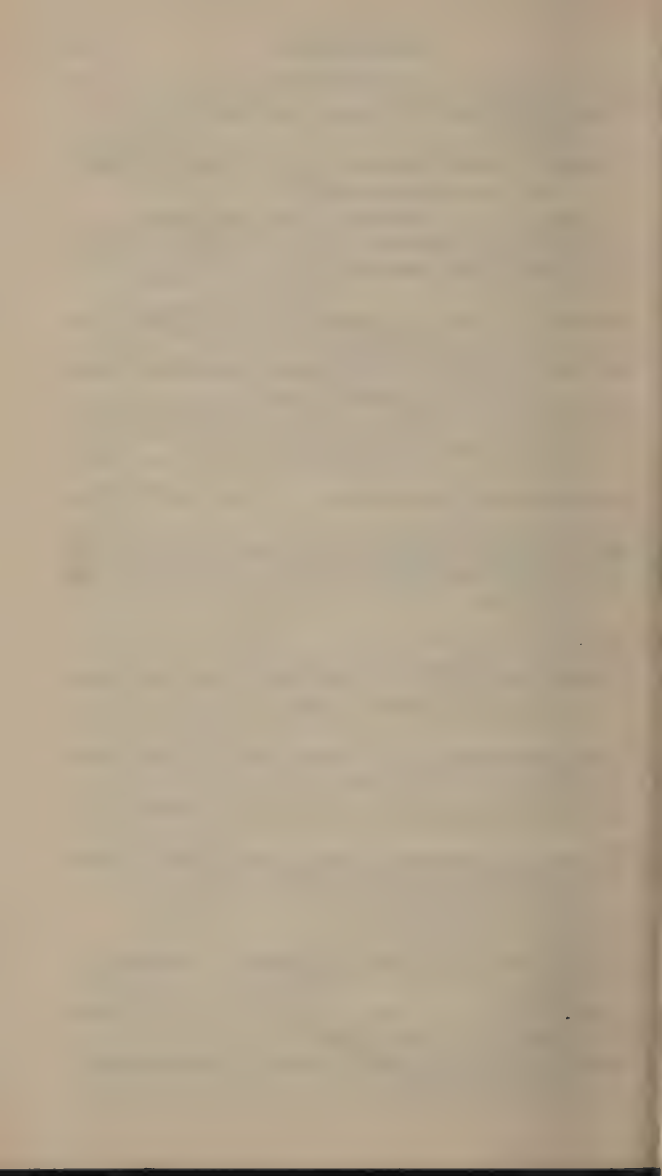
The eternal equilibrium of things is great, and the eternal
overthrow of things is great,

And there is another paradox.

Great is life . . and real and mystical . . wherever and
whoever,

Great is death Sure as life holds all parts together,
death holds all parts together;

Sure as the stars return again after they merge in the light,
death is great as life.



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